SONGS AND SATIRES

EDGAR LEE MASTERS

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SONGS AND SATIRES

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SONGS AND SATIRES

By
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AUTHOR OF
"SPOON RIVER ANTHOLOGY"

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SONGS AND SATIRES

SONGS AND SATIRES

SILENCE

I have known the silence of the stars and of the sea,
And the silence of the city when it pauses,
And the silence of a man and a maid,
And the silence for which music alone finds the word,
And the silence of the woods before the winds of spring
begin,
And the silence of the sick
When their eyes roam about the room.
And I ask: For the depths
Of what use is language?
A beast of the field moans a few times
When death takes its young:
And we are voiceless in the presence of realities —
We cannot speak.

A curious boy asks an old soldier
Sitting in front of the grocery store,
"How did you lose your leg?"
And the old soldier is struck with silence,
Or his mind flies away,
Because he cannot concentrate it on Gettysburg.

It comes back jocosely
And he says, "A bear bit it off."
And the boy wonders, while the old soldier
Dumbly, feebly lives over
The flashes of guns, the thunder of cannon,
The shrieks of the slain,
And himself lying on the ground,
And the hospital surgeons, the knives,
And the long days in bed.
But if he could describe it all
He would be an artist.
But if he were an artist there would be deeper wounds
Which he could not describe.

There is the silence of a great hatred,
And the silence of a great love,
And the silence of a deep peace of mind,
And the silence of an embittered friendship.
There is the silence of a spiritual crisis,
Through which your soul, exquisitely tortured,
Comes with visions not to be uttered
Into a realm of higher life.
And the silence of the gods who understand each other
without speech.
There is the silence of defeat.
There is the silence of those unjustly punished;
And the silence of the dying whose hand
Suddenly grips yours.

SILENCE

There is the silence between father and son,
When the father cannot explain his life,
Even though he be misunderstood for it.

There is the silence that comes between husband and wife.
There is the silence of those who have failed;
And the vast silence that covers
Broken nations and vanquished leaders.
There is the silence of Lincoln,
Thinking of the poverty of his youth.
And the silence of Napoleon
After Waterloo.
And the silence of Jeanne d'Arc
Saying amid the flames, "Blessed Jesus" —
Revealing in two words all sorrow, all hope.
And there is the silence of age,
Too full of wisdom for the tongue to utter it
In words intelligible to those who have not lived
The great range of life.

And there is the silence of the dead.
If we who are in life cannot speak
Of profound experiences,
Why do you marvel that the dead
Do not tell you of death?
Their silence shall be interpreted
As we approach them.

ST. FRANCIS AND LADY CLARE

Antonio loved the Lady Clare.
He caught her to him on the stair
And pressed her breasts and kissed her hair,
And drew her lips in his, and drew
Her soul out like a torch's flare.
Her breath came quick, her blood swirled round;
Her senses in a vortex swound.
She tore him loose and turned around,
And reached her chamber in a bound
Her cheeks turned to a poppy's hue.

She closed the door and turned the lock,
Her breasts and flesh were turned to rock.
She reeled as drunken from the shock.
Before her eyes the devils skipped,
She thought she heard the devils mock.
For had her soul not been as pure
As sifted snow, could she endure
Antonio's passion and be sure
Against his passion's strength and lure?
Lean fears along her wonder slipped.

Outside she heard a drunkard call,
She heard a beggar against the wall

Shaking his cup, a harlot's squall
Struck through the riot like a sword,
And gashed the midnight's festival.
She watched the city through the pane,
The old Silenus half insane,
The idiot crowd that drags its chain —
And then she heard the bells again,
And heard the voices with the word:

Ecco il santo! Up the street
There was the sound of running feet
From closing door and window seat,
And all the crowd turned on its way
The Saint of Poverty to greet.
He passed. And then a circling thrill,
As water troubled which was still,
Went through her body like a chill,
Who of Antonio thought until
She heard the Saint begin to pray.

And then she turned into the room
Her soul was cloven through with doom,
Treading the softness and the gloom
Of Asia's silk and Persia's wool,
And China's magical perfume.
She sickened from the vases hued
In corals, yellows, greens, the lewd
Twined dragon shapes and figures nude,

And tapestries that showed a brood
Of leopards by a pool!

Candles of wax she lit before
A pier glass standing from the floor;
Up to the ceiling, off she tore
With eager hands her jewels, then
The silken vesture which she wore.
Her little breasts so round to see
Were budded like the peony.
Her arms were white as ivory,
And all her sunny hair lay free
As marigold or celandine.

Her blue eyes sparkled like a vase
Of crackled turquoise, in her face
Was memory of the mad embrace
Antonio gave her on the stair,
And on her cheeks a salt tear's trace.
Like pigeon blood her lips were red.
She clasped her hands above her head.
Under her arms the waxlight shed
Delicate halos where was spread
The downy growth of hair.

Such sudden sin the virgin knew
She quenched the tapers as she blew
Puff! puff! upon them, then she threw
Herself in tears upon her knees,

And round her couch the curtain drew.
She called upon St. Francis' name,
Feeling Antonio's passion maim
Her body with his passion's flame
To save her, save her from the shame
Of fancies such as these!

"Go by mad life and old pursuits,
The wine cup and the golden fruits,
The gilded mirrors, rosewood flutes,
I would praise God forevermore
With harps of gold and silver lutes."
She stripped the velvet from her couch
Her broken spirit to avouch.
She saw the devils slink and slouch,
And passion like a leopard crouch
Half mirrored on the polished floor.

Next day she found the saint and said:
I would be God's bride, I would wed
Poverty and I would eat the bread
That you for anchorites prepare,
For my soul's sake I am in dread.
Go then, said Francis, nothing loth,
Put off this gown of green snake cloth,
Put on one somber as a moth,
Then come to me and make your troth
And I will clip your golden hair.

She went and came. But still there lay,
A gem she did not put away,
A locket twixt her breasts, all gay
In shimmering pearls and tints of blue,
And inlay work of fruit and spray.
St. Francis felt it as he slipped
His hand across her breast and whipped
Her golden tresses ere he clipped —
He closed his eyes then as he gripped
The shears, plunged the shears through.

The waterfall of living gold.
The locks fell to the floor and rolled,
And curled like serpents which unfold.
And there sat Lady Clare despoiled.
Of worldly glory manifold.
She thrilled to feel him take and hide
The locket from her breast, a tide
Of passion caught them side by side.
He was the bridegroom, she the bride —
Their flesh but not their spirits foiled.

Thus was the Lady Clare debased
To sack cloth and around her waist
A rope the jeweled belt replaced.
Her feet made free of silken hose
Naked in wooden sandals cased
Went bruised to Bastia's chapel, then

They housed her in St. Damian
And here she prayed for poor women
And here St. Francis sought her when
His faith sank under earthly woes.

Antonio cursed St. Clare in rhyme
And took to wine and got the lime
Of hatred on his soul, in time
Grew healed though left a little lame,
And laughed about it in his prime;
When he could see with crystal eyes
That love is a winged thing which flies;
Some break the wings, some let them rise
From earth like God's dove to the skies
Diffused in heavenly flame.

THE COCKED HAT

Would that some one would knock Mr. Bryan into a cocked hat. — Woodrow Wilson.

It ain't really a hat at all, Ed:
You know that, don't you?
When you bowl over six out of the nine pins,
And the three that are standing
Are the triangular three in front,
You've knocked the nine into a cocked hat.
If it was really a hat, he would be knocked in, too.
Which he hardly is. For a man with money,
And a man who can draw a crowd to listen
To what he says, ain't all-in yet. . . .
Oh yes, defeated
And killed off a dozen times, but still
He's one of the three nine pins that's standing . . .
Eh? Why, the other is Teddy, the other
Wilson, we'll say. We'll see, perhaps.
But six are down to make the cocked hat —
That's me and thousands of others like me,
And the first-rate men who were cuffed about
After the Civil War,
And most of the more than six million men
Who followed this fellow into the ditch,

While he walked down the ditch and stepped to the
level —
Following an ideal!

* * * * * * *

Do you remember how slim he was,
And trim he was,
With black hair and pale brow,
And the hawk-like nose and flashing eyes,
Not turning slowly like an owl
But with a sudden eagle motion? . . .

One time, in '96, he came here
And we had just a dollar and sixty cents
In the treasury of the organization.
So I stuck his lithograph on a pole
And started out for the station.
By the time we got back here to Clark street
Four thousand men were marching in line,
And a band that was playing for an opening
Of a restaurant on Franklin street
Had left the job and was following his carriage.
Why, it took all the money Mark Hanna could raise
To beat me, with nothing but a pole
And a lithograph.
And it wasn't because he was one of the prophets
Come back to earth again.
It shows how human hearts are hungry

How wonderfully true they are —
And how they will rise and follow a man
Who seems to see the truth!
Well, these fellows who marched are the cocked hat,
And I am the cocked hat and the six millions,
And more are the cocked hat,
Who got themselves despised or suspected
Of ignorance or something for being with him.
But still, he's one of the pins that's standing.
He got the money that he went after,
And he has a place in history, perhaps —
Because we took the blow and fell down
When the ripping ball went wild on the alley.

* * * * * * *

For we were radicals,
And he wasn't a radical.
Eh? Why, a radical stands for freedom,
And for truth — which he never finds
But always looks for.
A radical is not a moralist.
A radical doesn't say:
"This is true and you must believe it;
This is good and you must accept it,
And if you don't believe it and accept it
We'll get a law and make you,
And if you don't obey the law, we'll kill you —"
Oh no! A radical stands for freedom.

* * * * * * *

THE COCKED HAT

Do you remember that banquet at the Tremont
In '97 on Jackson's day?
Bryan and Altgeld walked together
Out to the banquet room.
That's the time he said the bolters must
Bring fruits meet for repentance — ha! ha! Oh, Gawd! —
They never did it and they didn't have to,
For they had made friends of the mammon of unrighteousness,
Even as he did, a little later, in his own way.
Well, Darrow was there that night.
I thought it was terribly raw in him,
But he said to Bryan, there, in a group:
"You'd better go back to Lincoln and study
Science, history, philosophy,
And read Flaubert's Madam something-or-other,
And quit this village religious stuff.
You're head of the party before you are ready
And a leader should lead with thought."
And Bryan turned to the others and said:
"Darrow's the only man in the world
Who looks down on me for believing in God."
"Your kind of a God," snapped Darrow.
Honest, Ed, I didn't see this religious business
In Bryan in '96 or 1900.
Oh well, I knew he went to Church,
And talked as statesmen do of God —

But McKinley did it, and I used to laugh:
"We've got a man to match McKinley,
And it's good for us, in a squeeze like this,
We didn't nominate some fellow
Ethical culture or Unitarian."
You see, the newspapers and preachers then
Were raising such a hullabaloo
About irreligion and dishonesty,
And calling old Altgeld an anarchist,
And comparing us to Robespierre
And the guillotine boys in France.
And a little of this religion came in handy.
The same as if you saw a Mason button on me,
You'd know, you see — but Gee!
He was 24-carat religious,
A cover-to-cover man. . . .
He was a trained collie,
And he looked like a lion,
There in the convention of '96 — What do you know
about that?

* * * * * * *

But right here, I tell you he ain't a hypocrite,
This ain't a pose. But I'll tell you:
In '96 when they knocked him out,
I know what he said to himself as well
As if I heard him say it . . .
I'll tell you in a minute.

But suppose you were giving a lecture on the constitution,
And you got mixed on your dates,
And the audience rotten-egged you,
And some one in the confusion
Stole the door receipts,
And there you were, disgraced and broke!
But suppose you could just change your clothes,
And lecture to the same audience
On the religious nature of Washington,
And be applauded and make money —
You'd do it, wouldn't you?
Well, this is what Bill said to himself:
"I'm naturally regular and religious.
I'm a moral man and I can prove it
By any one in Marion County,
Or Jacksonville or Lincoln, Nebraska.
I'm a radical, but a radical
Alone can be religious.
I belong to the church, if not to the bank,
Of the people who defeated me.
And I'll prove to religious people
That I'm a man to be trusted —
And just what a radical is.
And I'll make some money while winning the votes
Of the churches over the country." . . .

That's it — it ain't hypocrisy,
It's using what you are for ends,

When you find yourself in trouble.
And this accounts for "The Prince of Peace" —
Except no one but him could write it —
And "The Value of an Ideal" —
(Which is money in bank and several farms) . . .

His place in history?
One time my grandfather, who was nearly blind,
Went out to sow some grass seed.
They had two sacks in the barn,
One with grass seed, one with fertilizer,
And he got the sack with fertilizer,
And scattered it over the ground,
Thinking he was sowing grass.
And as he was finishing up, a grandchild,
Dorothy, eight years old,
Followed him, dropping flower seeds.
Well, after a time
That was the greatest patch of weeds
You ever saw! And the old man sat,
Half blind, on the porch, and said:
"Good land, that grass is growing!"
And there was nothing but weeds except
A few nasturtiums here and there
That Dorothy had sown. . . .
Well, I forgot.
There was a sunflower in one corner
That looked like a man with a golden beard

And a mass of tangled, curly hair —
And a pumpkin growing near it. . . .

* * * * * *

Say, Ed! lend me eighty dollars
To pay my life insurance.

THE VISION

Of that dear vale where you and I have lain
Scanning the mysteries of life and death
I dreamed, though how impassable the space
Of time between the present and the past!
This was the vision that possessed my mind;
I thought the weird and gusty days of March
Had eased themselves in melody and peace.
Pale lights, swift shadows, lucent stalks, clear streams,
Cool, rosy eves behind the penciled mesh
Of hazel thickets, and the huge feathered boughs
Of walnut trees stretched singing to the blast;
And the first pleasantries of sheep and kine;
The cautioned twitterings of hidden birds;
The flight of geese among the scattered clouds;
Night's weeping stars and all the pageantries
Of awakened life had blossomed into May,
Whilst she with trailing violets in her hair
Blew music from the stops of watery stems,
And swept the grasses with her viewless robes,
Which dreaming men thought voices, dreaming still.
Now as I lay in vision by the stream
That flows amidst our well beloved vale,
I looked throughout the vista stretched between

Two ranging hills; one meadowed rich in grass;
The other wooded, thick and quite obscure
With overgrowth, rank in the luxury
Of all wild places, but ever growing sparse
Of trees or saplings on the sudden slope
That met the grassy level of the vale; —
But still within the shadow of those woods,
Which sprinkled all beneath with fragrant dew,
There grew all flowers, which tempted little paths
Between them, up and on into the wood.
Here, as the sun had left his midday peak
The incommunicable blue of heaven blent
With his fierce splendor, filling all the air
With softened glory, while the pasturage
Trembled with color of the poppy blooms
Shook by the steps of the swift-sandaled wind.
Nor any sound beside disturbed the dream
Of Silence slumbering on the drowsy flowers.
Then as I looked upon the widest space
Of open meadow where the sunlight fell
In veils of tempered radiance, I saw
The form of one who had escaped the care
And equal dullness of our common day.
For like a bright mist rising from the earth
He made appearance, growing more distinct
Until I saw the stole, likewise the lyre
Grasped by the fingers of the modeled hand.
Yea, I did see the glory of his hair

Against the deep green bay-leaves filleting
The ungathered locks. And so throughout the vale
His figure stood distinct and his own shade
Was the sole shadow. Deeming this approach
Augur of good, as if in hidden ways
Of loveliness the gods do still appear
The counselors of men, and even where
Wonder and meditation wooed us oft,
I cried, "Apollo" — and his form dissolved,
As if the nymphs of echo, who took up
The voice and bore it to the hollow wood,
By that same flight had startled the great god
To vanishment. And thereupon I woke
And disarrayed the figment of my thought.
For of the very air, magic with hues,
Blent with the distant objects, I had formed
The splendid apparition, and so knew
It was, alas! a dream within a dream!

"SO WE GREW TOGETHER"

Reading over your letters I find you wrote me
"My dear boy," or at times "dear boy," and the envelope
Said "master" — all as I had been your very son,
And not the orphan whom you adopted.
Well, you were father to me! And I can recall
The things you did for me or gave me:
One time we rode in a box car to Springfield
To see the greatest show on earth;
And one time you gave me redtop boots,
And one time a watch, and one time a gun.
Well, I grew to gawkiness with a voice
Like a rooster trying to crow in August
Hatched in April, we'll say.
And you went about wrapped up in silence
With eyes aflame, and I heard little rumors
Of what they were doing to you, and how
They wronged you — and we were poor — so poor!
And I could not understand why you failed,
And why if you did good things for the people
The people did not sustain you.
And why you loved another woman than Aunt Susan,
So it was whispered at school, and what could be baser,
Or so little to be forgiven? . . .

They crowded you hard in those days.
But you fought like a wounded lion
For yourself I know, but for us, for me.
At last you fell ill, and for months you tottered
Around the streets as thin as death,
Trying to earn our bread, your great eyes glowing
And the silence around you like a shawl!
But something in you kept you up.
You grew well again and rosy with cheeks
Like an Indian peach almost, and eyes
Full of moonlight and sunlight, and a voice
That sang, and a humor that warded
The arrows off. But still between us
There was reticence; you kept me away
With a glittering hardness; perhaps you thought
I kept you away — for I was moving
In spheres you knew not, living through
Beliefs you believed in no more, and ideals
That were just mirrors of unrealities.
As a boy can be I was critical of you.
And reasons for your failures began to arise
In my mind — I saw specific facts here and there
With no philosophy at hand to weld them
And synthesize them into one truth —
And a rush of the strength of youth
Deluded me into thinking the world
Was something so easily understood and managed
While I knew it not at all in truth.

And an adolescent egotism
Made me feel you did not know me
Or comprehend the all that I was.
All this you divined. . . .

So it went. And when I left you and passed
To the world, the city — still I see you
With eyes averted, and feel your hand
Limp with sorrow — you could not speak.
You thought of what I might be, and where
Life would take me, and how it would end —
There was longer silence. A year or two
Brought me closer to you. I saw the play now
And the game somewhat and understood your fights
And enmities, and hardnesses and silences,
And wild humor that had kept you whole —
For your soul had made it as an antitoxin
To the world's infections. And you swung to me
Closer than before — and a chumship began
Between us. . . .

What vital power was yours!
You never tired, or needed sleep, or had a pain,
Or refused a delight. I loved the things now
You had always loved, a winning horse,
A roulette wheel, a contest of skill
In games or sports . . . long talks on the corner
With men who have lived and tell you

Things with a rich flavor of old wisdom or humor;
A woman, a glass of whisky at a table
Where the fatigue of life falls, and our reserves
That wait for happiness come up in smiles,
Laughter, gentle confidences. Here you were
A man with youth, and I a youth was a man,
Exulting in your braveries and delight in life.
How you knocked that scamp over at Harry Varnell's
When he tried to take your chips! And how I,
Who had thought the devil in cards as a boy,
Loved to play with you now and watch you play;
And watch the subtle mathematics of your mind
Prophecy, divine the plays. Who was it
In your ancestry that you harked back to
And reproduced with such various gifts
Of flesh and spirit, Anglo-Saxon, Celt? —
You with such rapid wit and powerful skill
For catching illogic and whipping Error's
Fangéd head from the body? . . .

I was really ahead of you
At this stage, with more self-consciousness
Of what man is, and what life is at last,
And how the spirit works, and by what laws,
With what inevitable force. But still I was
Behind you in that strength which in our youth,
If ever we have it, squeezes all the nectar
From the grapes. It seemed you'd never lose

This power and sense of joy, but yet at times
I saw another phase of you. . . .

There was the day
We rode together north of the old town,
Past the old farm houses that I knew —
Past maple groves, and fields of corn in the shock,
And fields of wheat with the fall green.
It was October, but the clouds were summer's,
Lazily floating in a sky of June;
And a few crows flying here and there,
And a quail's call, and around us a great silence
That held at its core old memories
Of pioneers, and dead days, forgotten things!
I'll never forget how you looked that day. Your hair
Was turning silver now, but still your eyes
Burned as of old, and the rich olive glow
In your cheeks shone, with not a line or wrinkle! —
You seemed to me perfection — a youth, a man!
And now you talked of the world with the old wit,
And now of the soul — how such a man went down
Through folly or wrong done by him, and how
Man's death cannot end all,
There must be life hereafter! . . .

As you were that day, as you looked and spoke,
As the earth was, I hear as the soul of it all
Godard's *Dawn*, Dvorák's *Humoresque*,
The Morris Dances, Mendelssohn's *Barcarole*,

And old Scotch songs, *When the Kye Come Hame*,
And *The Moon Had Climbed the Highest Hill*,
The Musseta Waltz and Rudolph's Narrative;
Your great brow seemed Beethoven's
And the lust of life in your face Cellini's,
And your riotous fancy like Dumas.
I was nearer you now than ever before,
And finding each other thus I see to-day
How the human soul seeks the human soul
And finds the one it seeks at last.
For you know you can open a window
That looks upon embowered darkness,
When the flowers sleep and the trees are still
At Midnight, and no light burns in the room;
And you can hide your butterfly
Somewhere in the room, but soon you will see
A host of butterfly mates
Fluttering through the window to join
Your butterfly hid in the room.
It is somehow thus with souls. . . .

This day then I understood it all:
Your vital democracy and love of men
And tolerance of life; and how the excess of these
Had wrought your sorrows in the days
When we were so poor, and the small of mind
Spoke of your sins and your connivance
With sinful men. You had lived it down,

Had triumphed over them, and you had grown
Prosperous in the world and had passed
Into an easy mastery of life and beyond the thought
Of further conquests for things.
As the Brahmins say, no more you worshiped matter,
Or scarcely ghosts, or even the gods
With singleness of heart.
This day you worshiped Eternal Peace
Or Eternal Flame, with scarce a laugh or jest
To hide your worship; and I understood,
Seeing so many facets to you, why it was
Blind Condon always smiled to hear your voice,
And why it was in a greenroom years ago
Booth turned to you, marking your face
From all the rest, and said, "There is a man
Who might play Hamlet — better still Othello";
And why it was the women loved you; and the priest
Could feed his body and soul together drinking
A glass of beer and visiting with you. . . .

Then something happened:
Your face grew smaller, your brow more narrow,
Dull fires burned in your eyes,
Your body shriveled, you walked with a cynical shuffle,
Your hands mixed the keys of life,
You had become a discord.
A monstrous hatred consumed you —
You had suffered the greatest wrong of all,

I knew and granted the wrong.
You had mounted up to sixty years, now breathing hard,
And just at the time that honor belonged to you
You were dishonored at the hands of a friend.
I wept for you, and still I wondered
If all I had grown to see in you and find in you
And love in you was just a fond illusion —
If after all I had not seen you aright as a boy:
Barbaric, hard, suspicious, cruel, redeemed
Alone by bubbling animal spirits —
Even these gone now, all of you smoke
Laden with stinging gas and lethal vapor. . . .
Then you came forth again like the sun after storm —
The deadly uric acid driven out at last
Which had poisoned you and dwarfed your soul —
So much for soul!

The last time I saw you
Your face was full of golden light,
Something between flame and the richness of flesh.
You were yourself again, wholly yourself.
And oh, to find you again and resume
Our understanding we had worked so long to reach —
You calm and luminant and rich in thought!
This time it seemed we said but "yes" or "no" —
That was enough; we smoked together
And drank a glass of wine and watched

"SO WE GREW TOGETHER"

The leaves fall sitting on the porch. . . .
Then life whirled me away like a leaf,
And I went about the crowded ways of New York.

And one night Alberta and I took dinner
At a place near Fourteenth Street where the music
Was like the sun on a breeze-swept lake
When every wave is a patine of fire,
And I thought of you not at all
Looking at Alberta and watching her white teeth
Bite off bits of Italian bread,
And watching her smile and the wide pupils
Of her eyes, electrified by wine
And music and the touch of our hands
Now and then across the table.
We went to her house at last.
And through a languorous evening.
Where no light was but a single candle,
We circled about and about a pending theme
Till at last we solved it suddenly in rapture
Almost by chance; and when I left
She followed me to the hall and leaned above
The railing about the stair for the farewell kiss —
And I went into the open air ecstatically,
With the stars in the spaces of sky between
The towering buildings, and the rush
Of wheels and clang of bells,
Still with the fragrance of her lips and cheeks

And glinting hair about me, delicate
And keen in spite of the open air.
And just as I entered the brilliant car
Something said to me you are dead —
I had not thought of you, was not thinking of you.
But I knew it was true, as it was,
For the telegram waited me at my room. . . .
I didn't come back.
I could not bear to see the breathless breath
Over your brow — nor look at your face —
However you fared or where
To what victories soever —
Vanquished or seemingly vanquished!

RAIN IN MY HEART

There is a quiet in my heart
Like one who rests from days of pain.
Outside, the sparrows on the roof
Are chirping in the dripping rain.

Rain in my heart; rain on the roof;
And memory sleeps beneath the gray
And windless sky and brings no dreams
Of any well remembered day.

I would not have the heavens fair,
Nor golden clouds, nor breezes mild,
But days like this, until my heart
To loss of you is reconciled.

I would not see you. Every hope
To know you as you were has ranged.
I, who am altered, would not find
The face I loved so greatly changed.

THE LOOP

From State street bridge a snow-white glimpse of sea
Beyond the river walled in by red buildings,
O'ertopped by masts that take the sunset's gildings,
Roped to the wharf till spring shall set them free.
Great floes make known how swift the river's current.
Out of the north sky blows a cutting wind.
Smoke from the stacks and engines in a torrent
Whirls downward, by the eddying breezes thinned.
Enskyed are sign boards advertising soap,
Tobacco, coal, transcontinental trains.
A tug is whistling, straining at a rope,
Fixed to a dredge with derricks, scoops and cranes.
Down in the loop the blue-gray air enshrouds,
As with a cyclops' cape, the man-made hills
And towers of granite where the city crowds.
Above the din a copper's whistle shrills.
There is a smell of coffee and of spices.
We near the market place of trade's devices.
Blue smoke from out a roasting room is pouring.
A rooster crows, geese cackle, men are bawling.
Whips crack, trucks creak, it is the place of storing,
And drawing out and loading up and hauling
Fruit, vegetables and fowls and steaks and hams,

Oysters and lobsters, fish and crabs and clams.
And near at hand are restaurants and bars,
Hotels with rooms at fifty cents a day,
Beer tunnels, pool rooms, places where cigars
And cigarettes their window signs display;
Mixed in with letterings of printed tags,
Twine, boxes, cartels, sacks and leather bags,
Wigs, telescopes, eyeglasses, ladies' tresses,
Or those who manicure or fashion dresses,
Or sell us putters, tennis balls or brassies,
Make shoes, pull teeth, or fit the eye with glasses.

And now the rows of windows showing laces,
Silks, draperies and furs and costly vases,
Watches and mirrors, silver cups and mugs,
Emeralds, diamonds, Indian, Persian rugs,
Hats, velvets, silver buckles, ostrich-plumes,
Drugs, violet water, powder and perfumes.
Here is a monstrous winking eye — beneath
A showcase by an entrance full of teeth.
Here rubber coats, umbrellas, mackintoshes,
Hoods, rubber boots and arctics and galoshes.
Here is half a block of overcoats,
In this bleak time of snow and slender throats.
Then windows of fine linen, snakewood canes,
Scarfs, opera hats, in use where fashion reigns.
As when the hive swarms, so the crowded street
Roars to the shuffling of innumerable feet.

Skyscrapers soar above them; they go by
As bees crawl, little scales upon the skin
Of a great dragon winding out and in.
Above them hangs a tangled tree of signs,
Suspended or uplifted like dædalian
Hieroglyphics when the saturnalian
Night commences, and their racing lines
Run fire of blue and yellow in a puzzle,
Bewildering to the eyes of those who guzzle,
And gourmandize and stroll and seek the bubble
Of happiness to put away their trouble.

Around the loop the elevated crawls,
And giant shadows sink against the walls
Where ten to twenty stories strive to hold
The pale refraction of the sunset's gold.
Slop underfoot, we pass beneath the loop.
The crowd is uglier, poorer; there are smells
As from the depths of unsuspected hells,
And from a groggery where beer and soup
Are sold for five cents to the thieves and bums.
Here now are huge cartoons in red and blue
Of obese women and of skeleton men,
Egyptian dancers, twined with monstrous snakes,
Before the door a turbaned lithe Hindoo,
A bagpipe shrilling, underneath a den
Of opium, whence a man with hand that shakes,
Rolling a cigarette, so palely comes.

THE LOOP

The clang of car bells and the beat of drums.
Draft horses clamping with their steel-shod hoofs.
The buildings have grown small and black and worn;
The sky is more beholden; o'er the roofs
A flock of pigeons soars; with dresses torn
And yellow faces, labor women pass
Some Chinese gabbling; and there, buying fruit,
Stands a fair girl who is a late recruit
To those poor women slain each year by lust.
'Tis evening now and trade will soon begin.
The family entrance beckons for a glass
Of hopeful mockery, the piano's din
Into the street with sounds of rasping wires
Filters, and near a pawner's window shows
Pistols, accordions; and, luring buyers,
A Jew stands mumbling to the passer-by
Of jewelry and watches and old clothes.
A limousine gleams quickly — with a cry
A legless man fastened upon a board
With casters 'neath it by a sudden shove
Darts out of danger. And upon the corner
A lassie tells a man that God is love,
Holding a tambourine with its copper hoard
To be augmented by the drunken scorner.
A woman with no eyeballs in her sockets
Plays "Rock of Ages" on a wheezy organ.
A newsboy with cold hands thrust in his pockets
Cries, "All about the will of Pierpont Morgan!"

The roofline of the street now sinks and dwindles.
The windows are begrimed with dust and beer.
A child half clothed, with legs as thin as spindles,
Carries a basket with some bits of coal.
Between lace curtains eyes of yellow leer,
The cheeks splotched with white places like the skin
Inside an eggshell — destitute of soul.
One sees a brass lamp oozing kerosene
Upon a stand whereon her elbows lean;
Lighted, it soon will welcome negroes in.

The railroad tracks are near. We almost choke
From filth whirled from the street and stinging vapors.
Great engines vomit gas and heavy smoke
Upon a north wind driving tattered papers,
Dry dung and dust and refuse down the street.
A circumambient roar as of a wheel
Whirring far off — a monster's heart whose beat
Is full of murmurs, comes as we retreat
Towards Twenty-second. And a man with jaw
Set like a tiger's, with a dirty beard,
Skulks toward the loop, with heavy wrists red-raw
Glowing above his pockets where his hands
Pushed tensely round his hips the coat tails draw,
And show what seems a slender piece of metal
In his hip pocket. On these barren strands
He waits for midnight for old scores to settle

Against his ancient foe society,
Who keeps the soup house and who builds the jails.
Switchmen and firemen with their dinner pails
Go by him homeward, and he wonders if
These fellows know a hundred thousand workers
Walk up and down the city's highways, stiff
From cold and hunger, doomed to poverty,
As wretched as the thieves and crooks and shirkers.
He scurries to the lake front, loiters past
The windows of wax lights with scarlet shades,
Where smiling diners back of ambuscades
Of silk and velvet hear not winter's blast
Blowing across the lake. He has a thought
Of Michigan, where once at picking berries
He spent a summer — then his eye is caught
At Randolph street by written light which tarries,
Then like a film runs into sentences.
He sees it all as from a black abyss.
Taxis with skid chains rattle, limousines
Draw up to awnings; for a space he catches
A scent of musk or violets, sees the patches
On powdered cheeks of furred and jeweled queens.
The color round his cruel mouth grows whiter,
He thrusts his coarse hands in his pockets tighter:
He is a thief, he knows he is a thief,
He is a thief found out, and, as he knows,
The whole loop is a kingdom held in fief
By men who work with laws instead of blows

From sling shots, so he curses under breath
The money and the invisible hand that owns
From year to year, in spite of change and death,
The wires for the lights and telephones,
The railways on the streets, and overhead
The railways, and beneath the winding tunnel
Which crooks stole from the city for a runnel
To drain her nickels; and the pipes of lead
Which carry gas, wrapped round us like a snake,
And round the courts, whose grip no court can break.
He curses bitterly all those who rise,
And rule by just the spirit which he plies
Coarsely against the world's great store of wealth;
Bankers and usurers and cliques whose stealth
Works witchcraft through the market and the press,
And hires editors, or owns the stock
Controlling papers, playing with finesse
The city's thinking, that they may unlock
Treasures and powers like burglars in the dark.
And thinking thus and cursing, through a flurry
Of sudden snow he hastens on to Clark.
In a cheap room there is an eye to mark
His coming and be glad. His footsteps hurry.
She will have money, earned this afternoon
Through men who took her from a near saloon
Wherein she sits at table to dragoon
Roughnecks or simpletons upon a lark.

Within a little hall a fierce-eyed youth
Rants of the burdens on the people's backs —
He would cure all things with the single tax.
A clergyman demands more gospel truth,
Speaking to Christians at a weekly dinner.
A parlor Marxian, for a beginner
Would take the railways. And amid applause
Where lawyers dine, a judge says all will be
Well if we hand down to posterity
Respect for courts and judges and the laws.
An anarchist would fight. Upon the whole,
Another thinks, to cultivate one's soul
Is most important — let the passing show
Go where it wills, and where it wills to go.

Outside the stars look down. Stars are content
To be so quiet and indifferent.

WHEN UNDER THE ICY EAVES

When under the icy eaves
  The swallow heralds the sun,
And the dove for its lost mate grieves
  And the young lambs play and run;
When the sea is a plane of glass,
  And the blustering winds are still,
And the strength of the thin snows pass
  In mists o'er the tawny hill —
The spirit of life awakes
In the fresh flags by the lakes.

When the sick man seeks the air,
  And the graves of the dead grow green,
Where the children play unaware
  Of the faces no longer seen;
When all we have felt or can feel,
  And all we are or have been,
And all the heart can hide or reveal,
  Knocks gently, and enters in: —
The spirit of life awakes,
In the fresh flags by the lakes.

IN THE CAR

We paused to say good-by,
As we thought for a little while,
Alone in the car, in the corner
Around the turn of the aisle.

A quiver came in your voice,
Your eyes were sorrowful too;
'Twas over — I strode to the doorway,
Then turned to wave an adieu.

But you had not come from the corner,
And though I had gone so far,
I retraced, and faced you coming
Into the aisle of the car.

You stopped as one who was caught
In an evil mood by surprise. —
I want to forget, I am trying
To forget the look in your eyes.

Your face was blank and cold,
Like Lot's wife turned to salt.
I suddenly trapped and discovered
Your soul in a hidden fault.

Your eyes were tearless and wide,
And your wide eyes looked on me
Like a Mænad musing murder,
Or the mask of Melpomene.

And there in a flash of lightning
I learned what I never could prove:
That your heart contained no sorrow,
And your heart contained no love.

And my heart is light and heavy,
And this is the reason why:
I am glad we parted forever,
And sad for the last good-by.

SIMON SURNAMED PETER

Time that has lifted you over them all —
O'er John and o'er Paul;
Writ you in capitals, made you the chief
Word on the leaf —
How did you, Peter, when ne'er on His breast
You leaned and were blest —
And none except Judas and you broke the faith
To the day of His death, —
You, Peter, the fisherman, worthy of blame,
Arise to this fame?

'Twas you in the garden who fell into sleep
And the watch failed to keep,
When Jesus was praying and pressed with the weight
Of the oncoming fate.
'Twas you in the court of the palace who warmed
Your hands as you stormed
At the damsel, denying Him thrice, when she cried:
"He walked at his side!"
"You, Peter, a wave, a star among clouds, a reed in
the wind,
A guide of the blind,

Both smiter and flyer, but human alway, I protest,
Beyond all the rest.

When at night by the boat on the sea He appeared
Did you wait till he neared?
You leaped in the water, not dreading the worst
In your joy to be first
To greet Him and tell Him of all that had passed
Since you saw Him the last.
You had slept while He watched, but fierce were you, fierce and awake
When they sought Him to take,
And cursing, no doubt, as you smote off, as one of the least,
The ear of the priest.
Then Andrew and all of them fled, but you followed Him, hoping for strength
To save him at length
Till you lied to the damsel, oh penitent Peter, and crept,
Into hiding and wept.

Oh well! But he asked all the twelve, "Who am I?"
And who made reply?
As you leaped in the sea, so you spoke as you smote with the sword;
"Thou art Christ, even Lord!"
John leaned on His breast, but he asked you, your strength to foresee,

"Nay, lovest thou me?"
Thrice over, as thrice you denied Him, and chose you
to lead
His sheep and to feed;
And gave you, He said, the keys of the den and the fold
To have and to hold.
You were a poor jailer, oh Peter, the dreamer, who saw
The death of the law
In the dream of the vessel that held all the four-footed
beasts,
Unclean for the priests;
And heard in the vision a trumpet that all men are
worth
The peace of the earth
And rapture of heaven hereafter, — oh Peter, what
power
Was yours in that hour:
You warder and jailer and sealer of fates and decrees,
To use the big keys
With which to reveal and fling wide all the soul and
the scheme
Of the Galilee dream,
When you flashed in a trice, as later you smote with
the sword:
"Thou art Christ, even Lord!"

We men, Simon Peter, we men also give you the crown
O'er Paul and o'er John.

We write you in capitals, make you the chief
Word on the leaf.
We know you as one of our flesh, and 'tis well
You are warder of hell,
And heaven's gatekeeper forever to bind and to loose —
Keep the keys if you choose.
Not rock of you, fire of you make you sublime
In the annals of time.
You were called by Him, Peter, a rock, but we give you the name
Of Peter the Flame.
For you struck a spark, as the spark from the shock
Of steel upon rock.
The rock has his use but the flame gives the light
In the way in the night: —
Oh Peter, the dreamer, impetuous, human, divine,
Gnarled branch of the vine!

ALL LIFE IN A LIFE

His father had a large family
Of girls and boys and he was born and bred
In a barn or kind of cattle shed.
But he was a hardy youngster and grew to be
A boy with eyes that sparkled like a rod
Of white hot iron in the blacksmith shop.
His face was ruddy like a rising moon,
And his hair was black as sheep's wool that is black.
And he had rugged arms and legs and a strong back.
And he had a voice half flute and half bassoon.
And from his toes up to his head's top
He was a man, simple but intricate.
And most men differ who try to delineate
His life and fate.

He never seemed ashamed
Of poverty or of his origin. He was a wayward child,
Nevertheless though wise and mild,
And thoughtful but when angered then he flamed
As fire does in a forge.
When he was ten years old he ran away
To be alone and watch the sea, and the stars
At midnight from a mountain gorge.

When he returned his parents scolded him
And threatened him with bolts and bars.
Then they grew soft for his return and gay
And with their love would have enfolded him.
But even at ten years old he had a way
Of gazing at you with a look austere
Which gave his kinfolk fear.
He had no childlike love for father or mother,
Sister or brother,
They were the same to him as any other.
He was a little cold, a little queer.

His father was a laborer and now
They made the boy work for his daily bread.
They say he read
A book or two during these years of work.
But if there was a secret prone to lurk
Between the pages under the light of his brow
It came forth. And if he had a woman
In love or out of love, or a companion or a chum,
History is dumb.
So far as we know he dreamed and worked with hands
And learned to know his genius' commands
Or what is called one's dæmon.

And this became at last the city's call.
He had now reached the age of thirty years,
And found a Dream of Life and a solution

For slavery of soul and even all
Miseries that flow from things material.
To free the world was his soul's resolution.
But his family had great fears
For him, knowing the evil
Which might befall him, seeing that the light
Of his own dream had blinded his mind's eyes.
They could not tell but what he had a devil.
But still in their tears despite,
And warnings he departed with replies
That when a man's genius calls him
He must obey no matter what befalls him.

What he had in his mind was growth
Of soul by watching,
And the creation of eyes
Over your mind's eyes to supervise
A clear activity and to ward off sloth.
What he had in his mind was scotching
And killing the snake of Hatred and stripping the glove
From the hand of Hypocrisy and quenching the fire
Of Falsehood and Unbrotherly Desire. —
What he had in his mind was simply Love.
And it was strange he preached the sword and force
To establish Love, but it was not strange,
Since he did this, his life took on a change.
And what he taught seems muddled at its source
With moralizing and with moral strife.

For morals are merely the Truth diluted
And sweetened up and suited
To the business and bread of Life.

And now this City was just what you'd find
A city anywhere,
A turmoil and a Vanity Fair,
A sort of heaven and a sort of Tophet.
There were so many leaders of his kind
The city didn't care
For one additional prophet.
He said some extravagant things
And planted a few stings
Under the rich man's hide.
And one of the sensational newspapers
Gave him a line or two for cutting capers
In front of the Palace of Justice and the Church.
But all of the first grade people took the other side
Of the street when they saw him coming
With a rag tag crowd singing and humming,
And curious boys and men up in a perch
Of a tree or window taking the spectacle in,
And the Corybantic din
Of a Salvation Army as it were.
And whatever he dreamed when he lived in a little town
The intelligent people ignored him, and this is the stir
And the only stir he made in the city.

But there was a certain sinister
Fellow who came to him hearing of his renown
And said "You can be Mayor of this city,
We need a man like you for Mayor."
And others said "You'd make a lawyer or a politician,
Look how the people follow you;
Why don't you hire out as a special writer,
You could become a business man, a rhetorician,
You could become a player,
You can grow rich. There's nothing for a fighter,
Fighting as you are, but to end in ruin."
But he turned from them on his way pursuing
The dream he had in view.

He had a rich man or two
Who took up with him against the powerful frown
Which looked him down.
For you'll always find a rich man or two
To take up with anything.
There are those who can't get into society or bring
Their riches to a social recognition;
Or ill-formed souls who lack the real patrician
Spirit for life.
But as for him he didn't care, he passed
Where the richness of living was rife.
And like wise Goethe talking to the last
With cabmen rather than with lords
He sat about the markets and the fountains,

He walked about the country and the mountains,
Took trips upon the lakes and waded fords
Barefooted, laughing as a young animal
Disports itself amid the festival
Of warm winds, sunshine, summer's carnival —
With laborers, carpenters, seamen
And some loose women.
And certain notable sinners
Gave him dinners.
And he went to weddings and to places where youth slakes
Its thirst for happiness, and they served him cakes
And wine wherever he went.
And he ate and drank and spent
His time in feasting and in telling stories,
And singing poems of lilies and of trees,
With crowds of people crowded around his knees
That searched with lightning secrets hidden
Of life and of life's glories,
Of death and of the soul's way after death.

Time makes amends usually for scandal's breath,
Which touched him to his earthly ruination.
But this city had a Civic Federation,
And a certain social order which intrigues
Through churches, courts, with an endless ramification
Of money and morals to save itself.
And this city had a Bar Association,

Also its Public Efficiency Leagues
For laying honest men upon the shelf
While making private pelf
Secure and free to increase.
And this city had illustrious Pharisees
And this city had a legion
Of men who make a business of religion,
With eyes one inch apart,
Dark and narrow of heart,
Who give themselves and give the city no peace,
And who are everywhere the best police
For Life as business.
And when they saw this youth
Was telling the truth,
And that his followers were multiplying,
And were going about rejoicing and defying
The social order and were stirring up
The dregs of discontent in the cup
With the hand of their own happiness,
They saw dynamic mysteries
In the poems of lilies and trees,
Therefore they held him for a felony.

If you will take a kernel of wheat
And first make free
The outer flake and then pare off the meat
Of edible starch you'll find at the kernel's core
The life germ. And this young man's words were dim

With blasphemy, sedition at the rim,
Which fired the heads of dreamers like new wine.
But this was just the outward force of him.
For this young man's philosophy was more
Than such external ferment, being divine
With secrets so profound no plummet line
Can altogether sound it. It means growth
Of soul by watching,
And the creation of eyes
Over your mind's eyes to supervise
A clear activity and to ward off sloth.
What he had in mind was scotching
And killing the snake of Hatred and stripping the glove
From the hand of Hypocrisy and quenching the fire
Of falsehood and unbrotherly Desire.
What he had in mind was simply Love.

But he was prosecuted
As a rebel and as a rebel executed
Right in a public place where all could see.
And his mother watched him hang for the felony.
He hated to die being but thirty-three,
And fearing that his poems might be lost.
And certain members of the Bar Association,
And of the Civic Federation,
And of the League of Public Efficiency,
And a legion
Of men devoted to religion,

With policemen, soldiers, roughs,
Loose women, thieves and toughs,
Came out to see him die,
And hooted at him giving up the ghost
In great despair and with a fearful cry!

And after him there was a man named Paul
Who almost spoiled it all.

And protozoan things like hypocrites,
And parasitic things who make a food
Of the mysteries of God for earthly power
Must wonder how before this young man's hour
They lived without his blood,
Shed on that day, and which
In red cells is so rich.

WHAT YOU WILL

April rain, delicious weeping,
  Washes white bones from the grave,
Long enough have they been sleeping.
  They are cleansed, and now they crave
Once more on the earth to gather
Pleasure from the springtime weather.

The pine trees and the long dark grass
  Feed on what is placed below.
Think you not that there doth pass
  In them something we did know?
This spell — well, friends, I greet ye once again
With joy — but with a most unuttered pain.

THE CITY

The Sun hung like a red balloon
As if he would not rise;
For listless Helios drowsed and yawned.
He cared not whether the morning dawned,
The brother of Eos and the Moon
Stretched him and rubbed his eyes.

He would have dreamed the dream again
That found him under sea:
He saw Zeus sit by Hera's side,
He saw Hæphestos with his bride;
He traced from Enna's flowery plain
The child Persephone.

There was a time when heaven's vault
Cracked like a temple's roof.
A new hierarchy burst its shell,
And as the sapphire ceiling fell,
From stern Jehovah's mad assault,
Vast spaces stretched aloof:

Great blue black depths of frozen air
Engulfed the soul of Zeus.
And then Jehovah reigned instead.

For Judah was living and Greece was dead.
And Hope was born to nurse Despair,
And the Devil was let loose.

* * * * * * *

Far off in the waste empyrean
The world was a golden mote.
And the Sun hung like a red balloon,
Or a bomb afire o'er a barracoon.
And the sea was drab, and the sea was green
Like a many colored coat.

The sea was pink like cyclamen,
And red as a blushing rose.
It shook anon like the sensitive plant,
Under the golden light aslant.
The little waves patted the shore again
Where the restless river flows.

And thus it has been for ages gone —
For a hundred thousand years;
Ere Buddha lived or Jesus came,
Or ever the city had place or name,
The sea thrilled through at the kiss of dawn
Like a soul of smiles and tears.

When the city's seat was a waste of sand,
And the hydra lived alone,
The sound of the sea was here to be heard,

And the moon rose up like a great white bird,
Sailing aloft from the yellow strand
To her silent midnight throne.

Now Helios eyes the universe,
And he knows the world is small.
Of old he walked through pagan Tyre,
Babylon, Sodom destroyed by fire,
And sought to unriddle the primal curse
That holds the race in thrall.

So he stepped from the Sun in robes of flame
As the city woke from sleep.
He walked the markets, walked the squares,
He walked the places of sweets and snares,
Where men buy honor and barter shame,
And the weak are killed as sheep.

He saw the city is one great mart
Where life is bought and sold.
Men rise to get them meat and bread
To barter for drugs or coffin the dead.
And dawn is but a plucked-up heart
For the dreary game of gold.

"Ho! ho!" said Helios, "father Zeus
Would never botch it so.
If he had stolen Joseph's bride,

PALOS VERDES PUBLIC LIBRARY

And let his son be crucified
The son's blood had been put to use
To ease the people's woe."

"He of the pest and the burning bush,
Of locusts, lice, and frogs,
Who made me stand, veiling my light,
While Joshua slaughtered the Amorite,
Who blacked the skin of the sons of Cush,
And builded the synagogues."

"And Jehovah the great is omnipotent,
While Zeus was bound by Fate.
But Athens fell when Peter took Rome,
And Chicago is made His hecatomb.
And since from the hour His son was sent
The hypocrite holds the state."

Helios traversed the city streets
And this is what he saw:
Some sold their honor, some their skill,
The soldier hired himself to kill,
The judges bartered the judgment seats
And trafficked in the law.

The starving artist sold his youth,
The writer sold his pen;
The lawyer sharpened up his wits

Like a burglar filing auger bits,
And Jesus' vicar sold the truth
To the famished sons of men.

In every heart flamed cruelty
Like a little emerald snake.
And each one knew if he should stand
In another's way the dagger-hand
Would make the stronger the feofee
Of the coveted wapentake.

There's not a thing men will not do
For honor, gold, or power.
We smile and call the city fair,
We call life lovely and debonair,
But Proserpina never grew
So deadly a passion flower.

Go live for an hour in a tropic land
Hid near a sinking pool:
The lion and tiger come to drink,
The boa crawls to the water's brink,
The elephant bull kneels down in the sand
And drinks till his throat is cool.

Jehovah will keep you awhile unseen
As you lie behind the rocks.
But go, if you dare, to slake your thirst,

CALIFORNIA LUTHERAN
COLLEGE LIBRARY

Though Jesus died for our life accursed
Your bones by the tiger will be licked clean
As he licks the bones of an ox.

And the sky may be blue as fleur de lis,
And the earth be tulip red;
And God in heaven, and life all good
While you lie hid in the underwood:
And the city may leave you sorrow free
If you ask it not for bread.

One day Achilles lost a horse
While the pest at Troy was rife,
And a million maggots fought and ate
Like soldiers storming a city's gate,
And Thersites said, as he looked at the corse,
"Achilles, that is life."

* * * * * * *

Day fades and from a million cells
The office people pour.
Like bees that crawl on the honeycomb
The workers scurry to what is home,
And trains and traffic and clanging bells
Make the cañon highways roar.

Helios walked the city's ways
Till the lights began to shine.
Then the janitor women start to scrub

And the Pharisees up and enter the club,
And the harlot wakes, and the music plays
And the glasses glow with wine.

Now we're good fellows one and all,
And the buffet storms with talk.
"The market's closed and trade's at end
We had our battle, now I'm your friend."
And thanks to the spirit of alcohol
Men go for a ride or walk.

Oh but traffic is not all done
Nor everything yet sold.
There's woman to win, and plots to weave,
There's a heart to hurt, or one to deceive,
And bargains to bind ere rise of Sun
To garner the morrow's gold.

The market at night is as full of fraud
As the market kept by day.
The courtesan buys a soul with a look,
A dinner tempers the truth in a book,
And love is sold till love is a bawd,
And falsehood froths in the play.

And men and women sell their smiles
For friendship's lifeless dregs.
For fear of the morrow we bend and bow

To moneybags with the slanting brow.
For the heart that knows life's little wiles
Seldom or never begs.

"Poor men," sighed Helios, "how they long
For the ultimate fire of love.
They yearn, through life, like the peacock moth,
And die worn out in search of the troth.
For love in the soul is the siren song
That wrecks the peace thereof."

* * * * * * *

Helios turned from the world and fled
As the convent bell tolled six.
For he caught a glimpse of an agéd crone
Who knelt beside a coffin alone;
She had sold her cloak to shrive the dead
And buy a crucifix!

THE IDIOT

Two children in a garden
Shouting for joy
Were playing dolls and houses,
A girl and boy.
I smiled at a neighbor window,
And watched them play
Under a budding oak tree
On a wintry day.

And then a board half broken
In the high fence
Fell over and there entered,
I know not whence,
A jailbird face of yellow
With a vacant sulk,
His body was a sickly
Thing of bulk.

His open mouth was slavering,
And a green light
Turned disc-like in his eyeballs,
Like a dog's at night.

His teeth were like a giant's,
And far apart;
I saw him reel on the children
With a stopping heart.
He trampled their dolls and ruined
The house they made;
He struck to earth the children
With a dirty spade.
As a tiger growls with an antelope
After the hunt,
Over the little faces
I heard him grunt.

I stood at the window frozen,
And short of breath,
And then I saw the idiot
Was Master Death!

A bird in the lilac bushes
Began to sing.
The garden colored before me
To the kiss of spring.
And the yellow face in a moment
Was a mystic white;
The matted hair was softened
To starry light.
The ragged coat flowed downward
Into a robe;

He carried a sword and a balance
And stood on a globe.
I watched him from the window
Under a spell;
The idiot was the angel
Azrael!

HELEN OF TROY

On an ancient vase representing in bas-relief the flight of Helen.

This is the vase of Love
Whose feet would ever rove
  O'er land and sea;
Whose hopes forever seek
Bright eyes, the vermeiled cheek,
  And ways made free.

Do we not understand
Why thou didst leave thy land,
  Thy spouse, thy hearth?
Helen of Troy, Greek art
Hath made our heart thy heart,
  Thy mirth our mirth.

For Paris did appear, —
Curled hair and rosy ear
  And tapering hands.
He spoke — the blood ran fast,
He touched, and killed the past,
  And clove its bands.

And this, I deem, is why
The restless ages sigh,
  Helen, for thee.
Whate'er we do or dream,
Whate'er we say or seem,
  We would be free.

We would forsake old love,
And all the pain thereof,
  And all the care;
We would find out new seas,
And lands more strange than these,
  And flowers more fair.

We would behold fresh skies
Where summer never dies
  And amaranths spring;
Lands where the halcyon hours
Nest over scented bowers
  On folded wing.

We would be crowned with bays,
And spend the long bright days
  On sea or shore;
Or sit by haunted woods,
And watch the deep sea's moods,
  And hear its roar.

Beneath that ancient sky
Who is not fain to fly
  As men have fled?
Ah! we would know relief
From marts of wine and beef,
  And oil and bread.

Helen of Troy, Greek art
Hath made our heart thy heart,
  Thy love our love.
For poesy, like thee,
Must fly and wander free
  As the wild dove.

O GLORIOUS FRANCE

You have become a forge of snow white fire,
A crucible of molten steel, O France!
Your sons are stars who cluster to a dawn
And fade in light for you, O glorious France!
They pass through meteor changes with a song
Which to all islands and all continents
Says life is neither comfort, wealth, nor fame,
Nor quiet hearthstones, friendship, wife nor child
Nor love, nor youth's delight, nor manhood's power,
Nor many days spent in a chosen work,
Nor honored merit, nor the patterned theme
Of daily labor, nor the crowns nor wreaths
Or seventy years.

These are not all of life,
O France, whose sons amid the rolling thunder
Of cannon stand in trenches where the dead
Clog the ensanguined ice. But life to these
Prophetic and enraptured souls is vision,
And the keen ecstasy of fated strife,
And divination of the loss as gain,
And reading mysteries with brightened eyes
In fiery shock and dazzling pain before

The orient splendor of the face of Death,
As a great light beside a shadowy sea;
And in a high will's strenuous exercise,
Where the warmed spirit finds its fullest strength
And is no more afraid. And in the stroke
Of azure lightning when the hidden essence
And shifting meaning of man's spiritual worth
And mystical significance in time
Are instantly distilled to one clear drop
Which mirrors earth and heaven.

This is life
Flaming to heaven in a minute's span
When the breath of battle blows the smoldering spark.
And across these seas
We who cry Peace and treasure life and cling
To cities, happiness, or daily toil
For daily bread, or trail the long routine
Of seventy years, taste not the terrible wine
Whereof you drink, who drain and toss the cup
Empty and ringing by the finished feast;
Or have it shaken from your hand by sight
Of God against the olive woods.

As Joan of Arc amid the apple trees
With sacred joy first heard the voices, then
Obeying plunged at Orleans in a field
Of spears and lived her dream and died in fire,

O GLORIOUS FRANCE

Thou, France, hast heard the voices and hast lived
The dream and known the meaning of the dream,
And read its riddle: How the soul of man
May to one greatest purpose make itself
A lens of clearness, how it loves the cup
Of deepest truth, and how its bitterest gall
Turns sweet to soul's surrender.

And you say:
Take days for repetition, stretch your hands
For mocked renewal of familiar things:
The beaten path, the chair beside the window,
The crowded street, the task, the accustomed sleep,
And waking to the task, or many springs
Of lifted cloud, blue water, flowering fields —
The prison house grows close no less, the feast
A place of memory sick for senses dulled
Down to the dusty end where pitiful Time
Grown weary cries Enough!

FOR A DANCE

There is in the dance
The joy of children on a May day lawn.
The fragments of old dreams and dead romance
Come to us from the dancers who are gone.

What strains of ancient blood
Move quicker to the music's passionate beat?
I see the gulls fly over a shadowy flood
And Munster fields of barley and of wheat.

And I see sunny France,
And the vine's tendrils quivering to the light,
And faces, faces, yearning for the dance
With wistful eyes that look on our delight.

They live through us again
And we through them, who wish for lips and eyes
Wherewith to feel, not fancy, the old pain
Passed with reluctance through the centuries

To us, who in the maze
Of dancing and hushed music woven afresh
Amid the shifting mirrors of hours and days
Know not our spirit, neither know our flesh;

Nor what ourselves have been,
  Through the long way that brought us to the dance:
I see a little green by Camolin
  And odorous orchards blooming in Provence.

Two listen to the roar
  Of waves moon-smitten, where no steps intrude.
Who knows what lips were kissed at Laracor?
  Or who it was that walked through Burnham wood?

WHEN LIFE IS REAL

We rode, we rode against the wind.
The countless lights along the town
Made the town blacker for their fire,
And you were always looking down.

To 'scape the blustering breath of March,
Or was it for your mind's disguise?
Still I could shut my eyes and see
The turquoise color of your eyes.

Surely your ermine furs were warm,
And warm your flowing cloak of red;
Was it the wild wind kept you thus
Pensive and with averted head?

I scarcely spoke, my words were swept
Like winged things in the wind's despite.
We rode, and with what shadow speed
Across the darkness of the night!

Without a word, without a look.
What was the charm and what the spell
That made one hour of life become
A memory ever memorable?

* * * * * * *

WHEN LIFE IS REAL

All craft, all labor, all desire,
All toil of age, all hope of youth
Are shadows from the fount of fire
And mummers of the truth.

How bloodless books, how pulseless art,
Vain kingly and imperial zeal,
Vain all memorials of the heart!
When Life itself is real!

We traced the golden clouds of spring,
We roved the beach, we walked the land.
What was the world? A Phantom thing
That vanished in your hand.

You were as quiet as the sky.
Your eyes were liquid as the sea.
And in that hour that passed us by
We lived eternally.

THE QUESTION

I

The sea moans and the stars are bright,
The leaves lisp 'neath a rolling moon.
I shut my eyes against the night
And make believe the time is June —
The June that left us over-soon.

This is the path and this the place
We sat and watched the moving sea,
And I the moonlight on your face.
We were not happy — woe is me,
Happiness is but memory!

It seemeth, now that you are gone,
My heart a measured pain doth keep: —
Are you now, as I am, alone?
Do you make merry, do you weep?
In whose arms are you now asleep?

THE ANSWER

II

I made my bed beneath the pines
Where the sea washed the sandy bars;
I heard the music of the winds,
And blest the aureate face of Mars.
All night a lilac splendor throve
Above the heaven's shadowy verge;
And in my heart the voice of love
Kept music with the dreaming surge.

A little maid was at my side —
She slept — I scarcely slept at all;
Until toward the morning-tide
A dream possessed me with its thrall.
She sweetly breathed; around my breast
I felt her warmth like drowsy bliss,
Then came the vision of unrest —
I saw your face and felt your kiss.

I woke and knew with what dismay
She read my secret and surprise;
She only said, "Again 'tis day!
How red your cheeks, how bright your eyes!"

THE SIGN

There's not a soul on the square,
And the snow blows up like a sail,
Or dizzily drifts like a drunken man
Falling, before the gale.

And when the wind eddies it rifts
The snow that lies in drifts;
And it skims along the walk and sifts
In stairways, doorways all about
The steps of the church in an angry rout.
And one would think that a hungry hound
Was out in the cold for the sound.

But I do not seem to mind
The snow that makes one blind,
Nor the crying voice of the wind —
I hate to hear the creak of the sign
Of Harmon Whitney, attorney at law:
With its rhythmic monotone of awe.
And neither a moan nor yet a whine,
Nor a cry of pain — one can't define
The sound of a creaking sign.

Especially if the sky be bleak,
And no one stirs however you seek,
And every time you hear it creak
You wonder why they leave it stay
When a man is buried and hidden away
Many a day!

WILLIAM MARION REEDY

He sits before you silent as Buddha,
And then you say
This man is Rabelais.
And while you wonder what his stock is,
English or Irish, you behold his eyes
As big and brown as those desirable crockies
With which as boys we used to play.
And then you see the spherical light that lies
Just under the iris coloring,
Before which everything,
Becomes as plain as day.

If you have noticed the rolling jowls
And the face that speaks its chief
Delight in beer and roast beef
Before you have seen his eyes, you see
A man of fleshly jollity,
Like the friars of old in gowns and cowls
To make a show of scowls.
And when he speaks from an orotund depth that growls
In a humorous way like Fielding or Smollett
That turns in a trice to Robert La Follette

Or retraces to Thales of Crete,
And touches upon Descartes coming back
Through the intellectual Zodiac
That's something of a feat.
And you see that the eyes are really the man,
For the thought of him proliferates
This way over to Hindostan,
And that way descanting on Yeats.
With a word on Plato's symposium,
And a little glimpse of Theocritus,
Or something of Bruno's martyrdom,
Or what St. Thomas Aquinas meant
By a certain line obscure to us.
And then he'll take up Horace's odes
Or the Roman civilization;
Or a few of the Iliad's episodes,
Or the Greek deterioration.
Or skip to a word on the plasmic jelly,
Which Benjamin Moore and others think
Is the origin of life. Then Shelley
Comes in a for a look of understanding.
Or he'll tell you about the orientation
Of the ancient dream of Zion.
Or what's the matter with Bryan.
And while the porter is bringing a drink
Something into his fancy skips
And he talks about the Apocalypse,
Or a painter or writer now unknown

In France or Germany who will soon
Have fame of him through the whole earth blown.

It's not so hard a thing to be wise
In the lore of books.
It's a different thing to be all eyes,
Like a lighthouse which revolves and looks
Over the land and out to sea:
And a lighthouse is what he seems to me!
Sitting like Buddha spiritually cool,
Young as the light of the sun is young,
And taking the even with the odd
As a matter of course, and the path he's trod
As a path that was good enough.
With a sort of transcendental sense
Whose hatred is less than indifference,
And a gift of wisdom in love.
And who can say as he classifies
Men and ages with his eyes
With cool detachment: this is dung,
And that poor fellow is just a fool.
And say what you will death is a rod.
But I see a light that shines and shines
And I rather think it's God.

A STUDY

If your thoughts were as clear as your eyes,
And the whole of your heart were true,
You were fitter by far for winning —
But then that would not be you.

If your pulse beat time to love
As fast as you think and plan,
You could kindle a lasting passion
In the breast of the strongest man.

If you felt as much as you thought,
And dreamed what you seem to dream,
A world of elysian beauty
Your ruined heart would redeem.

If you thought in the light of the sun,
Or the blood in your veins flowed free,
If you gave your kisses but gladly,
We two could better agree.

If you were strong where I counted,
And weak where yourself were at stake,
You would have my strength for your giving,
You would gain and not lose for my sake.

If your heart overruled your head,
Or your head were lord of your heart,
Or the two were lovingly balanced,
I think we never should part.

If you came to me spite of yourself,
And staid not away through design,
These days of loving and living
Were sweet as Olympian wine.

If you could weep with another,
And tears for yourself controlled,
You could waken and hold to a pity
You waken, but do not hold.

If your lips were as fain to speak
As your face is fashioned to hide —
You would know that to lay up treasure
A woman's heart must confide.

If your bosom were something richer,
Or your hands more fragile and thin,
You would call what the world calls evil,
Or sin and be glad of the sin.

If your soul were aflame with love,
Or your head were devoted to truth,
You never would toss on your pillow
Bewildered 'twixt rapture and ruth.

A STUDY

If you were the you of my dreams,
And the you of my dreams were mine,
These days, half sweet and half bitter,
Would taste like Olympian wine.

Oh, subtle and mystic Egyptians!
Who chiseled the Sphinx in the East,
With head and the breasts of a woman,
And body and claws of a beast.

And gave her a marvellous riddle
That the eyeless should read as he ran:
What crawls and runs and is baffled
By woman, the sphinx — but a man?

Many look in her face and are conquered,
Where one all her heart has explored;
A thousand have made her their sovereign,
But one is her sovereign and lord.

For him she leaps from her standard
And fawns at his feet in the sand,
Who sees that himself is her riddle,
And she but the work of his hand.

PORTRAIT OF A WOMAN

The pathos in your face is like a peace,
It is like resignation or a grace
Which smiles at the surcease
Of hope. But there is in your face
The shadow of pain, and there is a trace
Of memory of pain.

I look at you again and again,
And hide my looks lest your quick eye perceives
My search for your despair.
I look at your pale hands — I look at your hair;
And I watch you use your hands, I watch the flare
Of thought in your eyes like light that interweaves
A flutter of color running under leaves —
Such anguished dreams in your eyes!
And I listen to you speak
Words like crystals breaking with a tinkle,
Or a star's twinkle.
Sometimes as we talk you rise
And leave the room, and then I rub a streak
Of a tear from my cheek.

You tell me such magical things
Of pictures, books, romance

And of your life in France
In the varied music of exquisite words,
And in a voice that sings.

All things are memory now with you,
For poverty girds
Your hopes, and only your dreams remain.
And sometimes here and there
I see as you turn your head a whitened hair,
Even when you are smiling most.
And a light comes in your eyes like a passing ghost,
And a color runs through your cheeks as fresh
As burns in a girl's flesh.
Then I can shut my eyes and feel the pain
That has become a part of you, though I feign
Laughter myself. One sees another's bruise
And shakes his thought out of it shuddering.
So I turn and clamp my will lest I bring
Your sorrow into my flesh, who cannot choose
But hear your words and laughter,
And watch your hands and eyes.

Then as I think you over after
I have gone from you, and your face
Comes to me with its grace
Of memory of unfound love:
You seem to me the image of all women
Who dream and keep under smiles the grief thereof,
Or sew, or sit by windows, or read books

To hide their Secret's looks.
And after a time go out of life and leave
No uttered word, but in their silence grieve
For Life and for the things no tongue can tell:
Why Life hurts so, and why Love haunts and hurts
Poor men and women in this demi-hell.

Perhaps your pathos means that it is well
Death in his time the aspiring torch inverts,
And all tired flesh and haunted eyes and hands
Moving in painéd whiteness are put under
The soothing earth to brighten April's wonder.

IN THE CAGE

The sounds of mid-night trickle into the roar
Of morning over the water growing blue.
At ten o'clock the August sunbeams pour
A blinding flood on Michigan Avenue.

But yet the half-drawn shades of bottle green
Leave the recesses of the room
With misty auras drawn around their gloom
Where things lie undistinguished, scarcely seen.

You, standing between the window and the bed
Are edged with rainbow colors. And I lie
Drowsy with quizzical half-open eye
Musing upon the contour of your head,
Watching you comb your hair,
Clothed in a corset waist and skirt of silk,
Tied with white braid above your slender hips
Which reaches to your knees and makes your bare
And delicate legs by contrast white as milk.
And as you toss your head to comb its tresses
They flash upon me like long strips of sand
Between a moonlit sea, pale as your hand,

And a red sun that on a high dune stresses
Its sanguine heat.

And then at times your lips,
Protruding half unconscious half in scorn
Engage my eyes while looking through the morn
At the clear oval of your brow brought full
Over the sovereign largeness of your eyes;
Or at your breasts that shake not as you pull
The comb through stubborn tangles, only rise
Scarcely perceptible with breath or signs,
Firm unmaternal like a young Bacchante's,
Or at your nose profoundly dipped like Dante's
Over your chin that softly melts away.

Now you seem fully under my heart's sway.
I have slipped through the magic of your mesh
Freed once again and strengthened by your flesh,
You seem a weak thing for a strong man's play.
Yet I know now that we shall scarce have parted
When I shall think of you half heavy hearted.
I know our partings. You will faintly smile
And look at me with eyes that have no guile,
Or have too much, and pass into the sphere
Where you keep independent life meanwhile.
How do you live without me, is the fear?
You do not lean upon me, ask my love, or wonder
Of other loves I may have hidden under
These casual renewals of our love.

And if I loved you I should lie in flame,
And go about re-murmuring your name,
And these are things a man should be above.

And as I lie here on the imminent brink
Of soul's surrender into your soul's power,
And in the white light of the morning hour
I see what life would be if we should link
Our lives together in a marriage pact:
For we would walk along a boundless tract
Of perfect hell; but your disloyalty
Would be of spirit, for I have not won
Mastered and bound your spirit unto me.
And if you had a lover in the way
I have you it would not by half betray
My love as does your vague and chainless thought,
Which wanders, soars or vanishes, returns,
Changes, astonishes, or chills or burns,
Is unresisting, plastic, freely wrought
Under my hands yet to no unison
Of my life and of yours. Upon this brink
I watch you now and think
Of all that has been preached or sung or spoken
Of woman's tragedy in woman's fall;
And all the pictures of a woman broken
By man's superior strength.

And there you stand
Your heart and life as firmly in command

Of your resolve as mine is, knowing all
Of man, the master, and his power to harm,
His rulership of spheres material,
Bread, customs, rules of fair repute —
What are they all against your slender arm?
Which long since plucked the fruit
Of good and evil, and of life at last
And now of Life. For dancing you have cast
Veil after veil of ideals or pretense
With which men clothe the being feminine
To satisfy their lordship or their sense
Of ownership and hide the things of sin —
You have thrown them aside veil after veil;
And there you stand unarmored, weirdly frail,
Yet strong as nature, making comical
The poems and the tales of woman's fall. . . .
You nod your head, you smile, I feel the air
Made by the closing door. I lie and stare
At the closed door. One, two, your tuftèd steps
Die on the velvet of the outer hall.
You have escaped. And I would not pursue.
Though we are but caged creatures, I and you —
A male and female tiger in a zoo.
For I shall wait you. Life himself will track
Your wanderings and bring you back,
And shut you up again with me and cage
Our love and hatred and our silent rage.

SAVING A WOMAN: ONE PHASE

To a lustful thirst she came at first
And gave him her maiden's pride;
And the first man scattered the flower of her love,
Then turned to his chosen bride.

She waned with grief as a fading star,
And waxed as a shining flame;
And the second man had her woman's love,
But the second was playing the game.

With passion she stirred the man who was third;
Woe's me! what delicate skill
She plied to the heart that knew her art
And fled from her wanton will.

Now calm and demure, oh fair, oh pure,
Oh subtle, patient and wise,
She trod the weary round of life,
With a sorrow deep in her eyes.

Now a hero who knew how false, how true
Was the speech that fell from her lips,
With a Norseman's strength took sail with her,
And landed and burnt his ships.

He gave her pity, he gave her mirth,
And the hurt in her heart he nursed;
But under the silence of her brows
Was a dream of the man who was first.

And all the deceit and lust of men
Had sharpened her own deceit;
And down to the gates of hell she led
Her friend with her flying feet.

For a bitten bud will never bloom,
And a woman lost is lost!
And the first and the third may go unscathed,
But some man pays the cost.

And the books of life are full of the rune,
And this is the truth of the song:
No man can save a woman's soul,
Nor right a woman's wrong.

LOVE IS A MADNESS

Love is a madness, love is a fevered dream,
A white soul lost in a field of scarlet flowers —
Love is a search for the lost, the ever vanishing gleam
Of wings, desires and sorrows and haunted hours.

Will the look return to your eyes, the warmth to your hand?
Love is a doubt, an ache, love is a writhing fear.
Love is a potion drunk when the ship puts out from land,
Rudderless, sails at full, and with none to steer.

The end is a shattered lamp, a drunken seraph asleep,
The upturned face of the drowned on a barren beach.
The glare of noon is o'er us, we are ashamed to weep —
The beginning and end of love are devoid of speech.

ON A BUST

Your speeches seemed to answer for the nonce —
They do not justify your head in bronze!
Your essays! talent's failures were to you
Your philosophic gamut, but things true,
Or beautiful, oh never! What's the pons
For you to cross to fame? — Your head in bronze?

What has the artist caught? The sensual chin
That melts away in weakness from the skin,
Sagging from your indifference of mind;
The sullen mouth that sneers at human kind
For lack of genius to create or rule;
The superficial scorn that says "you fool!"
The deep-set eyes that have the mud-cat look
Which might belong to Tolstoi or a crook.
The nose half-thickly fleshed and half in point,
And lightly turned awry as out of joint;
The eyebrows pointing upward satyr-wise,
Scarce like Mephisto, for you scarcely rise
To cosmic irony in what you dream —
More like a tomcat sniffing yellow cream.
The brow! 'Tis worth the bronze it's molded in
Save for the flat-top head and narrow thin

ON A BUST

Backhead which shows your spirit has not soared.
You are a Packard engine in a Ford,
Which wrecks itself and turtles with its load,
Too light and powerful to keep the road.
The master strength for twisting words is caught
In the swift turning wheels of iron thought.
With butcher knives your hands can vivisect
Our butterflies, but you can not erect
Temples of beauty, wisdom. You can crawl
Hungry and subtle over Eden's wall,
And shame half grown up truth, or make a lie
Full grown as good. You cannot glorify
Our dreams, or aspirations, or deep thirst.
To you the world's a fig tree which is curst.
You have preached every faith but to betray;
The artist shows us you have had your day.

A giant as we hoped, in truth a dwarf;
A barrel of slop that shines on Lethe's wharf,
Which seemed at first a vessel with sweet wine
For thirsty lips. So down the swift decline
You went through sloven spirit, craven heart
And cynic indolence. And here the art
Of molding clay has caught you for the nonce
And made your shame our shame — your head in bronze!
Some day this bust will lie amid old metals
Old copper boilers, wires, faucets, kettles.

Some day it will be melted up and molded
In door knobs, inkwells, paper knives, or folded
In leaves and wreaths around the capitals
Of marble columns, or for arsenals
Fashioned in something, or in course of time
Successively made each of these, from grime
Rescued successively, or made a bell
For fire or worship, who on earth can tell?
One thing is sure, you will not long be dust
When this bronze will be broken as a bust
And given to the junkman to re-sell.
You know this and the thought of it is hell!

ARABEL

Twists of smoke rise from the limpness of jewelled
fingers,
The softness of Persian rugs hushes the room.
Under a dragon lamp with a shade the color of coral
Sit the readers of poems one by one.
And all the room is in shadow except for the blur
Of mahogany surface, and tapers against the wall.

And a youth reads a poem of love: forever and ever
Is his soul the soul of the loved one; a woman sings
Of the nine months which go to the birth of a soul.
And after a time under the lamp a man
Begins to read a letter having no poem to read.
And the words of the letter flash and die like a fuse
Dampened by rain — it's a dying mind that writes
What Byron did for the Greeks against the Turks.
And a sickness enters our hearts. The jewelled hands
Clutch at the arms of the chairs — about the room
One hears the parting of lips, and a nervous shifting
Of feet and arms.

And I look up and over
The reader's shoulder and see the name of the writer.
What is it I see? The name of a man I knew!

You are an ironical trickster, Time, to bring
After so many years and into a place like this
This face before me: hair slicked down and parted
In the middle and cheeks stuck out with fatness,
Plump from camembert and clicquot, eyelids
Thin as skins of onions, cut like dough 'round the eyes.
Such was your look in a photograph I saw
In a silver frame on a woman's dresser — and such
Your look in life, you thing of flesh alone!

And then
As a soul looks down on the body it leaves —
A body by fever slain — I look on myself
As I was a decade ago, while the letter is read:

I enter a box
Of a theater with Jim, my friend of fifty,
I being twenty-two. Two women are in the box
One of an age for Jim and one of an age for me.
And mine is dressed in a dainty gown of dimity,
And she fans herself with a fan of silver spangles
Till a subtle odor of delicate powder or of herself
Enters my blood and I stare at her snowy neck,
And the glossy brownness of her hair until
She feels my stare, and turns half-view and I see
How like a Greek's is her nose, with just a little
Aquiline touch; and I catch the flash of an eye,
And the glint of a smile on the richness of her lips.

The company now discourses upon the letter
But my dream goes on:

I re-live a rapture
Which may be madness, and no man understands
Until he feels it no more. The youth that was I
From the theater under the city's lights follows the girl
Desperate lest in the city's curious chances
He never sees her again. And boldly he speaks.
And she and the older woman, her sister
Smile and speak in turn, and Jim who stands
While I break the ice comes up — and so
Arm in arm we go to the restaurant,
I in heaven walking with Arabel,
And Jim with her older sister.
We drive them home under a summer moon,
And while I explain to Arabel my boldness,
And crave her pardon for it, Jim, the devil,
Laughs apart with her sister while I wonder
What Jim, the devil, is laughing at. No matter
To-morrow I walk in the park with Arabel.

Just now the reader of the letter
Tells of the writer's swift descent
From wealth to want.

We are in the park next afternoon by the water.
I look at her white throat full as it were of song.
And her rounded virginal bosom, beautiful!

PALOS VERDES PUBLIC LIBRARY

And I study her eyes, I search to the depths her eyes
In the light of the sun. They are full of little rays
Like the edge of a fleur de lys, and she smiles
At first when I fling my soul at her feet.

But when I repeat I love her, love her only,
A cloud of wonder passes over her face,
She veils her eyes. The color comes to her cheeks.
And when she picks some clover blossoms and tears them
Her hand is trembling. And when I tell her again
I love her, love her only, she blots her eyes
With a handkerchief to hide a tear that starts.

And she says to me: "You do not know me at all,
How can you love me? You never saw me before
Last night." "Well, tell me about yourself."
And after a time she tells me the story:
About her father who ran away from her mother;
And how she hated her father, and how she grieved
When her mother died; and how a good grandmother
Helped her and helps her now. And how her sister
Divorced her husband. And then she paused a moment:
"I am not strong, you'd have to guard me gently,
And that takes money, dear, as well as love.
Two years ago I was very ill, and since then
I am not strong."

"Well I can work," I said.
"And what would you think of a little cottage
Not too far out with a yard and hosts of roses,
And a vine on the porch, and a little garden,
And a dining room where the sun comes in,
When a morning breeze blows over your brow,
And you sit across the table and serve me
And neither of us can speak for happiness
Without our voices breaking, or lips trembling."

She is looking down with little frowns on her brow.
"But if ever I had to work, I could not do it,
I am not really well."

"But I can work," I said.
I rise and lift her up, holding her hand.
She slips her arm through mine and presses it.
"What a good man you are," she said. "Just like a brother —
I almost love you, I believe I love you."

The reader of the letter, being a doctor,
Is talking learnedly of the writer's case
Which has the classical marks of paresis.

Next day I look up Jim and rhapsodize
About a cottage with roses and a garden,
And a dining room where the sun comes in,
And Arabel across the table. Jim is smoking
And flicking the ashes, but never says a word

Till I have finished. Then in a quiet voice:
"Arabel's sister says that Arabel's straight,
But she isn't, my boy — she's just like Arabel's sister.
She knew you had the madness for Arabel.
That's why we laughed and stood apart as we talked.
And I'll tell you now I didn't go home that night,
I shook you at the corner and went back,
And staid that night. Now be a man, my boy,
Go have your fling with Arabel, but drop
The cottage and the roses."

They are still discussing the madman's letter.

And memory permeates me like a subtle drug:
The memory of my love for Arabel,
The torture, the doubt, the fear, the restless longing,
The sleepless nights, the pity for all her sorrows,
The speculation about her and her sister,
And what her illness was;
And whether the man I saw one time was leaving
Her door or the next door to it, and if her door
Whether he saw my Arabel or her sister. . . .

The reader of the letter is telling how the writer
Left his wife chasing the lure of women.

And it all comes back to me as clear as a vision:
The night I sat with Arabel strong but conquered.
Whatever I did, I loved her, whatever she was.
Madness or love the terrible struggle must end.
She took my hand and said, "You must see my room."

We stood in the doorway together and on her dresser
Was a silver frame with the photograph of a man —
I had seen him in life: hair slicked down and parted
In the middle and cheeks stuck out with fatness
Plump from camembert and clicquot, eyelids
Thin as skins of onions, cut like dough 'round the eyes.
"There is his picture," she said, "ask me whatever you will.
Take me as mistress or wife, it is yours to decide.
But take me as mistress and grow like the picture before you,
Take me as wife and be the good man you can be.
Choose me as mistress — how can I do less for dearest?
Or make me your wife — fate makes me your mistress or wife."
"I can leave you," I said. "You can leave me," she echoed,
"But how about hate in your heart."
"You are right," I replied.

The company is now discussing the subject of love —
They seem to know little about it.

But my wife, who is sitting beside me, exclaims:
"Well, what is this jangle of madness and weakness,
What has it to do with poetry, tell me?"
"Well, it's life," Arabel.
"There's the story of Hamlet, for instance," I added.
Then fell into silence.

JIM AND ARABEL'S SISTER

Last night a friend of mine and I sat talking,
When all at once I found 'twas one o'clock.
So we came out and he went home to wife
And children, and I started for the club
Which I call home; and then just like a flash
You came into my mind. I bought a slug
And stood, in the booth, with doubtful heart and heard
The buzzer buzz. Well, it was sweet to me
To hear your voice at last — it was so drowsy,
Like a child's voice. And I could see your eyes
Heavy with sleep, and I could see you standing
In nightgown with head leaned against the wall. . . .

Julia! the welcome of your drowsy voice
Went through me like the warmth of priceless wine —
It showed your understanding, that you know
How it is with a man, and how it is with me
Who work by day and sometimes drift by night
About this hellish city. Though you know
That I am fifty-one, can you imagine
My feeling with no children growing up?
My feeling as of one who sees a play
And afterwards sits somewhere at a table

And talks with friends about the different parts
Over a sandwich and a glass of beer?
My feeling with this money which I've made
And cannot use? Sometimes the stress of working
The money dulls the fancy which could use it
In splendid dreams or in the art of life.
Well, here was I ringing your bell at last
At half-past one, and there you stood before me
With a sleepy voice and a sleepy smile, with hands
So warm, and cheeks so red from sleep, not vexed,
But like a child, awakened, who smiles at you
With half-shut eyes and kisses you, so you
Gave me a kiss. The world seems better, Julia,
For that kiss which you gave me at the door. . . .

Breakfast? Why, toast and coffee, not too strong,
My heart acts queer of late. . . .

I want to say
Lest I forget it, if you ever hear
From Arabel or Francis what I said
To Francis when he told me he intended
To marry Arabel, why just remember
Our talk this morning and forget I said it —
I'm sorry that I said it. But, you see,
That night we met, I being fifty-one
And old at what men call the game, looked on
With steady eye and quiet nerve, I saw you
Just as I'd see a woman anywhere;

And I found you as I'd found others before you,
But with this difference so it seemed to me:
What had been false with them was real with you,
What had been shame with them with you was life,
What had been craft with them with you was nature,
What had been sin with them to you was good,
What had been vice with them to you the honest
And uncorrupted innocence of a human
Heart so human looking on our souls.
What had been coarse to them to you was clean
As rain is, or fresh flowers, all things that grow
And move and sing along creation's way.
You came to me like friendship, what you gave
Was friendship's gift, when friends think least of self
And least of motive. And it is through you
That I have risen out of the pit where sneers
And laughter, looks and words obscene,
Blaspheme our nature. It is through you, Julia,
As one amid great beach trees where soft mosses
Pillow our heads and where we see the clouds
Upon their infinite sailings and the lake
Washes beneath us, and we lie and think
How this has been forever and will be
When we are dust a thousand, thousand years,
Yet how life is eternal — just as one
Who there falls into prayer for ecstasy
Of wonder, prophecy could not blaspheme
The Eternal Power (as he might well blaspheme

The gospel hymns and ritual) that I
Cannot blaspheme you, Julia.
For what is our communion, yours and mine,
If it be not a way of laying hold
On that mysterious essence which makes one
Of heaven and earth, makes kindred human hands. . .
Tears are not like you, Julia; laugh, that's right!
Pour me a little coffee, if you please.

I'll take from my herbarium certain species
To make my points: Now here there is the woman
Of life promiscuous, or nearly so.
She fixes her design upon a man,
Who's married and the riotous game begins.
They go along a year or two perhaps.
Then psychic chemistry performs its part:
They are in love, or he's in love with her.
What shall be done with love? Now watch the woman:
That which she gave without love at the first
She now withdraws in spite of love unless
He breaks his life up, cuts all former ties
And weds her. Do you wonder sometimes men
Kill women with a knife or strangle them?
Well, here's another: She has been to Ogontz,
You meet her at a dinner-dance, we'll say.
She has green eyes and hair as light as jonquils;
She wears black velvet and a salmon sash.

And when you dance with her she has a way
Of giving you her flesh beneath thin silk,
Which almost lisps as she caresses you
With legs that scarcely touch you; and she says
Things with a double meaning, and she smiles
To carry out her meaning. Well, you think
The girl is yours, and after weeks of chasing
She lands you up at the appointed place
With mamma, who looks at you with big eyes,
That have a nervous way of opening
And closing slowly like a big wax doll's,
From which great clouds of wrath and wonder come;
Which meeting is a way of saying to you:
The girl is yours if you will marry her,
And let her have your money.

Julia, be still;
I can't go on while you are laughing so.
I know that men are easy, but to see
Women as women see them is a gift
That comes to men who reach my age in life. . . .

Well, here's another, here's the type of woman
Whose power of motherhood conceals the art
By which she thrives, through which she reaches also
An apotheosis in society.
Her dream is children conscious or unconscious.
And her strength is the race's, and she draws
The urgings of posterity and leans

Upon the hopes and ideals of the day.
To her a man must sacrifice his life.
But women, Julia, of whatever type,
Are still but waiting ovules seeking man,
And man's life to develop, even to live.
And like the praying mantis who's devoured
In the embrace, man is devoured by women
In some way, by some sort. Love is a flame
In man's life where he warms him but to suck
The invisible heat and perish. Life is cramped,
Bound down with many ropes, shut in by gates —
Love is not free which should be wholly free
For Life's sake.

On Michigan Avenue

At lunch time, or at five o'clock, you'll see
In rain or shine a certain tailor walk
In modish coat and trousers, with a cane.
That fellow is the pitifulest man I know.
He has no woman, cannot find a woman,
Because all women, seeing him, divine
What surges through him, and within their hearts
Laugh slyly and deny him for the fun
Of seeing how denial keeps him walking
All up and down the boulevard. He's found
No hand of human friendship like yours, Julia.
I use him for my point. If we could make
Some fine erotometer one could sit
And watch its trembling springs and nervous hands

Record the waves of longing in the city,
And the urge of life that writhes beneath the blows
Of custom and of fear. Love is not free,
Which should be wholly free for Life's sake.

Julia.

So much for all these things, and now for you
To whom they lead.
You'll find among the marshes
The sundew and the pitcher plant; in shallows,
Where the green scum floats languidly you'll find
The water lily with white petals and
A sickly perfume. But the sundew catches
The midges flitting by with rainbow wings,
Impales them on its tiny spines, in time
Devours them. And the pitcher plant holds out
Its cup of green for larger bugs, which fall
Into the water, treasured there like tears
Of women, and so drowned are soon absorbed
Into the verdant vesture of its leaves.
The pitcher plant and sundew, water lily
Well typify the nature of most women
Who must have blood or soul of man to live —
Except you, Julia. For my friend at Hinsdale
Who raises flowers laid out a primrose bed.
He read somewhere that primroses will change
Under your eyes sometimes to something else,
Become another flower and not a primrose,

Another species even. So he watched
And saw it, saw this miracle! The seed
Has somewhere in its vital self the power
Of this mutation. What is the origin
Of spiritual species? For you're a primrose, Julia,
Who has mutated: You are not a mother;
Nor are you yet the woman seeking marriage;
Nor yet the woman thriving by her sex;
Nor yet the woman spoken of by Solomon
Who waits and watches and whose steps lead down
To death and hell. Nor yet Delilah who
Rejoices in the secret of man's strength
And in subduing it.

You are a flower
Designed to comfort such poor men as I,
And show the world how love can be a thing
That asks no more than what it freely gives,
And gives all — all some women call the prize
For life or honor, riches, power or place.
You are a blossom in the primrose bed
So raised to subtler color, sweeter scent.
You have mutated, Julia, that is it,
This flower of you is what I call *The Lover!*

THE SORROW OF DEAD FACES

I have seen many faces changed by the Sculptor Death —
But never a face like Harold's who passed in a throe of pain.
There were maidens and youths in the bud, and men in the lust of life;
And women whom child-birth racked till the crying soul slipped through;
Patriarchs withered with age and nuns ascetical white;
And one who wasted her virgin wealth in a riot of joy.
Brothers and sisters at last in a quiet and purple pall,
Fellow voyagers bound to a port on an ash-blue sea,
Locked in an utterless grief, in a mystery fearful to dream.
All of these I have seen — but the face of Harold the bold
Looked with a penitent pallor and stared with a sad surprise.

For now at last he was still who never knew rest in life.
And the ardent heat of his blood was cold as the sweat of a stone.

Life came in an evil hour and stabbed with a poisoned
word
The heart of a girl who faintly smiled through her
tears.
And her little life was tossed as the eddies that whirl
in the hollows
From the great world-currents that wreck the battle
ships at sea.
And the face of dead Lillian seemed like a rain-ruined
flower.

Or what is writ on the brow of the babe as the mother
wails for the day
When it leaped in the light of the sun and babbled
its pure delight?

But the face of William the Great was fashioned by
life and thought;
And death made it massive as bronze, and deepened
the lines thereof:
Some for the will and some for patience, and some for
hope —
Hope for the weal of the world wherein he mightily
strove —
Yet what did it all bespeak — what but submission
and awe,
And a trace of pain as one with a sword in his side?

I have seen many faces changed by the Sculptor Death
But the sorrow thereof is dumb like the cloth that lies
on the brow.
So what should be said of the faun surprised in the
woodland dances,
Of Harold the light of heart who fought with fear to
the last?

THE CRY

There's a voice in my heart that cries and cries for tears.
It is not a voice, but a pain of many fears.
It is not a pain, but the rune of far-off spheres.

It may be a dæmon of pent and high emprise,
That looks on my soul till my soul hides and cries,
Loath to rebuke my soul and bid it arise.

It may be myself as I was in another life,
Fashioned to lead where strife gives way to strife,
Pinioned here in failure by knife thrown after knife.

The child turns o'er in the womb; and perhaps the soul
Nurtures a dream too strong for the soul's control,
When the dream hath eyes, and senses its destined goal.

Deep in darkness the bulb under mould and clod
Feels the sun in the sky and pushes above the sod;
Perhaps this cry in my heart is nothing but God!

THE HELPING HAND

Mother, my head is bloody, my breast is red with scars.
Well, foolish son, I told you so, why went you to the wars?

Mother, my soul is crucified, my thirst is past belief.
How are you crucified, my son, betwixt a thief and thief?

Mother, I feel the terror and the loveliness of life.
Tell me of the children, son, and tell me of the wife.

Mother, your face is but a face among a million more.
You're standing on the deck, my son, and looking at the shore.

I lean against the wall, mother, and struggle hard for breath.
You must have heard the step, my son, of the patrolman Death.

Mother, my soul is weary, where is the way to God?
Well, kiss the crucifix, my son, and pass beneath the rod.

THE DOOR

This is the room that thou wast ushered in.
Wouldst thou, perchance, a larger freedom win?
Wouldst thou escape for deeper or no breath?
There is no door but death.

Do shadows crouch within the mocking light?
Stand thou! but if thy terrored heart takes flight
Facing maimed Hope and wide-eyed Nevermore,
There is no less one door.

Dost thou bewail love's end and friendship's doom,
The dying fire, drained cup, and gathering gloom?
Explore the walls, if thy soul ventureth —
There is no door but death.

There is no window. Heaven hangs aloof
Above the rents within the stairless roof.
Hence, soul, be brave across the ruined floor —
Who knocks? Unbolt the door!

SUPPLICATION

For He knoweth our frame, He remembereth that we are dust. — PSALM CIII. 14.

Oh Lord, when all our bones are thrust
  Beyond the gaze of all but Thine;
And these blaspheming tongues are dust
  Which babbled of Thy name divine,
How helpless then to carp or rail
  Against the canons of Thy word;
Wilt Thou, when thus our spirits fail,
    Have mercy, Lord?

Here from this ebon speck that floats
  As but a mote within Thine eye,
Vain sneers and curses from our throats
  Rise to the vault of Thy fair sky:
Yet when this world of ours is still
  Of this all-wondering, tortured horde,
And none is left for Thee to kill —
    Have mercy, Lord!

Thou knowest that our flesh is grass;
  Ah! let our withered souls remain
Like stricken reeds of some morass,
  Bleached, in Thy will, by ceaseless rain.

SUPPLICATION

Have we not had enough of fire,
  Enough of torment and the sword? —
If these accrue from Thy desire —
    Have mercy, Lord!

Dost Thou not see about our feet
  The tangles of our erring thought?
Thou knowest that we run to greet
  High hopes that vanish into naught.
We bleed, we fall, we rise again;
  How can we be of Thee abhorred?
We are Thy breed, we little men —
    Have mercy, Lord!

Wilt Thou then slay for that we slay,
  Wilt Thou deny when we deny?
A thousand years are but a day,
  A little day within Thine eye:
We thirst for love, we yearn for life;
  We lust, wilt Thou the lust record?
We, beaten, fall upon the knife —
    Have mercy, Lord!

Thou givest us youth that turns to age;
  And strength that leaves us while we seek.
Thou pourest the fire of sacred rage
  In costly vessels all too weak.
Great works we planned in hopes that Thou
  Fit wisdom therefor wouldst accord;

Thou wrotest failure on our brow —
Have mercy, Lord!

Could we but know, as Thou dost know —
Hold the whole scheme at once in mind!
Yet, dost Thou watch our anxious woe
Who piece with palsied hands and blind
The fragments of our little plan,
To thrive and earn Thy blest reward,
And make and keep the world of man —
Have mercy, Lord!

Thou settest the sun within his place
To light the world, the world is Thine,
Put in our hands and through Thy grace
To be subdued and made divine.
Whether we serve Thee ill or well,
Thou knowest our frame, nor canst afford
To leave Thy own for long in hell —
Have mercy, Lord!

THE CONVERSATION

The Human Voice

You knew then, starting let us say with ether,
You would become electrons, out of whirling
Would rise to atoms; then as an atom resting
Till through Yourself in other atoms moving
And by the fine affinity of power
Atom with atom massed, You would go on
Over the crest of visible forms transformed,
Would be a molecule, a little system
Wherein the atoms move like suns and planets
With satellites, electrons. So as worlds build
From star-dust, as electron to electron,
The same attraction drawing, molecules
Would wed and pass over the crest again
Of visible forms, lying content as crystals,
Or colloids — ready now to use the gleam
Of life. As 'twere I see You with a match,
As one in darkness lights a candle, and one
Sees not his friend's form in the shadowed room
Until the candle's lighted? Even his form
Is darkened by the new-made light, he stands
So near it! Well, I add to all I've asked
Whether You knew the cell born to the glint

Of that same lighted candle would not rest
Even as electrons rest not — but would surge
Over the crest of visible forms, become
Beneath our feet things hidden from the eye
However aided, — as above our heads
Beyond the Milky Way great systems whirl
Beyond the telescope, — become bacilli,
Amœba, starfish, swimming things, on land
The serpent, and then birds, and beasts of prey
The tiger (You in the tiger) on and on
Surging above the crest of visible forms until
The ape came — oh what ages they are to us —
But still creation flies on wings of light —
Then to the man who roamed the frozen fields
Neither man nor ape, — we found his jaw, You know,
At Heidelberg, in a sand-pit. On and on
Till Babylon was builded, and arose
Jerusalem and Memphis, Athens, Rome,
Venice and Florence, Paris, London, Berlin,
New York, Chicago — did You know, I ask,
All this would come of You in ether moving?

A Voice

I knew.

The Human Voice

You knew that man was born to be destroyed,
That as an atom perfect, whole, at ease,
Drawn to some other atom, is broken, changed

And rises o'er the crest of visible things
To something else — that man must pass as well
Through equal transformation. And You knew
The unutterable things of man's life: From the first
You saw his wracked Deucalion-soul that looks
Backward on life that rises, where he rose
Out of the stones. You saw him looking forward
Over the purple mists that hide the gulf.
Ere the green cell rose, even in the green cell
You saw the sequences of thought — You saw
That one would say, "All's matter" and another,
"All's mind," and man's mind which reflects the image,
Could not envision it. That even worship
Of what you are would be confused by cries
From India or Palestine. That love
Which sees itself beginning in the seeds,
Which fly and seek each other, maims
The soul at the last in loss of child or friend
Father or mother. And You knew that sex,
Ranging from plants through beasts and up to us
Had ties of filth — And out of them would rise
Diverse philosophies to tear the world.
You knew, when the green cell arose, that even
The You which formed it moving on would bring
Races and breeds, madmen, tyrants, slaves,
The idiot child, the murderer, the insane —
All springing from the action of one law.
You knew the enmity that lies between

The lives of micro-beings and our own. You knew
How man would rise to vision of himself:
Immortal only in the race's life.
And past the atom and the first glint of life,
Saw him with soul enraptured, yet o'ershadowed
Amid self-consciousness!

A Voice

I knew.
But this your fault: You see me as apart,
Over, removed, at enmity with You.
You are in Me, and of Me, even at one
With Me. But there's your soul — your soul may be
The germinal cell of vaster evolution.
Why try to tell you? If I gave a cell
Voice to inquire, and it should ask you this:
"After me what, a stalk, a flower, life
That swims or crawls?" And if I gave to you
Wisdom to say: "You shall become a reed
By the water's edge" — how could the cell foresee
What the reed is, bending beneath the wind
When the lake ripples and the skies are blue
As larkspur? Therefore I, who moved in darkness
Becoming light in suns and light in souls
And mind with thought — for what is thought but light
Sprung from the clash of ether? — I am with you.
And if beyond this stable state that stands

For your life here (as cells are whole and balanced
Till the inner urge bring union, then a breaking
And building up to higher life), there is
No memory of this world nor of your thought,
Nor sense of life on this world lived and borne;
Or whether you remember, know yourself
As one who lived here, suffered here, aspired —
What does it matter? — you cannot be lost,
As I am lost not. Therefore be at peace.
And from the laws whose orbits cross and run
To seeming tangles, find the law through which
Your soul shall be perfected till it draw, —
As the green cell the sunlight draws and turns
Its chemical effulgence into life —
My inner splendor. All the rest is mine
In infinite time. For if I should unroll
The parchment of the future, it were vain —
You could not read it.

TERMINUS

Terminus shows the ways and says,
"All things must have an end."
Oh, bitter thought we hid away
When first you were my friend.

We hid it in the darkest place
Our hearts had place to hide,
And took the sweet as from a spring
Whose waters would abide.

For neither life nor the wide world
Has greater store than this: —
The thought that runs through hands and eyes
And fills the silences.

There is a void the agéd world
Throws over the spent heart;
When Life has given all she has,
And Terminus says depart.

When we must sit with folded hands,
And see with inward eye
A void rise like an arctic breath
To hollow the morrow's sky.

TERMINUS

To-morrow is, and trembling leaves,
And 'wildered winds from Thrace
Look for you where your face has bloomed,
And where may bloom your face.

Beyond the city, over the hill,
Under the anguished moon,
The winds and my dreams seek after you
By meadow, water and dune.

All things must have an end, we know;
But oh, the dreaded end;
Whether in life, whether in death,
To lose the cherished friend.

To lose in life the cherished friend,
While the myrtle tree is green;
To live and have the cherished friend
With only the world between.

With only the wide, wide world between,
Where memory has mortmain.
Life pours more wine in the heart of man
Than the heart of man can contain.

Oh, heart of man and heart of woman,
Thirsting for blood of the vine,
Life waits till the heart has lived too much
And then pours in new wine!

MADELINE

I almost heard your little heart
Begin to beat, and since that hour
Your life has grown apace and blossomed,
Fed by the same miraculous power,

That moved the rivulet of your life,
And made your heart begin to beat.
Now all day your steps are a-patter.
Oh, what swift and musical feet!

You sleep. I wait to see you wake,
With wonder-eyes and hands that reach.
I laugh to hear your thoughts that gather
Too fast on your budding lips for speech.

Your sunny hair is cut as if
'Twere trimmed around a yellow crock.
How gay the ribbon, and oh, how cunning
The flaring skirt of the little frock!

You build and play and search and pry,
And hunt for dolls and forgotten toys.
Why do you never tire of playing,
Or cease from mischief, or cease from noise?

MADELINE

You will not sleep? You are tired of the house?
You are just as naughty as you can be.
Madeline, Madeline, come to the garden,
And play with Marcia under the tree!

MARCIA

Madeline's hair is straight and yours
Is just as curly as tendril vines;
And she is fair, but a deeper color
Your cheeks of olive incarnadines.

A serious wisdom burns and glows
Steadily in your dark-eyed look.
Already a wit and a little stoic —
Perhaps you are going to write a book,

Or paint a picture, or sing or act
The part of Katherine or Juliet.
I believe you were born with the gift of knowing
When to remember and when to forget.

And when to stifle and kill a grief,
And clutch your heart when it beats in vain.
The heart that has most strength for feeling
Must have the strength to conquer the pain.

You understand? It seems that you do —
Though you cannot utter a word to me.
Marcia, Marcia, look at Madeline
Building a doll-house under the tree!

THE ALTAR

My heart is an altar whereon
Many sacrificial fires have been kindled
In praise of spring and Aphrodite.

My heart is an altar of chalcedony,
Crowned with a tablet of bronze,
Blacked with smoke, scarred with fire,
And scented with the aromatic bitterness
Of dead incense.

Albeit let us murmur a little Doric prayer
Over the ashes which lie scattered around the altar;
For the April rain has wept over them,
And from them the crocus smelts its Roman gold.

What though there are remnants here
Of faded coronals,
And bits of silver string
Torn from forgotten harps?
Perfect amid the ashes sleeps a cup of amethyst.
Let us take it and pour the sea from it;
And while the savor of dead lips is washed away,
Let us lift our hands to this sky of hyacinth.
Let us light the altar newly, for lo! it is spring.

Bring from the re-kindled woodland
Flames of columbine, jewel-weed and trumpet-creeper,
There where the woodman burns the fallen tree,
And scented smoke arises
On azure wings between the branches,
Budding with adolescent life.
With these let us light the altar,
That a scarlet flame may lean
Against the silver sea.

For thou art fire also,
And air, and water, and the resurgent earth,
For thou art woman, thou art love.
Thou art April of the Arcadian moon,
Thou art the swift sun racing through snowy clouds,
Thou art the creative silence of flowering valleys.
Thy face is the apple tree in bloom;
Thine eyes the glimpses of green water
When the tree's blossoms shake
As soft winds fan them.
Thy hair is flame blown against the sea's mist —
Thou art spring.

The fire on the altar burns brightly,
And the sea sparkles in the sun.
Let us murmur a Doric prayer
For the gift of love,
For the gift of life,
Oh Life! Oh Love! We lift our hands to thee!

SOUL'S DESIRE

Her soul is like a wolf that stands
Where sunlight falls between the trees
Of a sparse forest's leafless edge,
When Spring's first magic moveth these.

Her soul is like a little brook,
Thin edged with ice against the leaves,
Where the wolf drinks and is alone,
And where the woodbine interweaves.

A bank late covered by the snow,
But lighted by the frozen North;
Her soul is like a little plot
That one white blossom bringeth forth.

Her soul is slim, like silver slips,
And straight, like flags beside a stream.
Her soul is like a shape that moves
And changes in a wonder dream.

Who would pursue her clasps a cloud,
And taketh sorrow for his zeal.
Memory shall sing him many songs
While bound upon the torture wheel.

Her soul is like a wolf that glides
By moonlight o'er a phantom ridge;
Her face is like a light that runs
Beneath the shadow of a bridge.

Her voice is like a woodland cry
Heard in a summer's desolate hour.
Her eyes are dim; her lips are faint,
And tinctured like the cuckoo flower.

Her little breasts are like the buds
Of tulips in a place forlorn.
Her soul is like a mandrake bloom
Standing against the crimson moon.

Her dream is like the fenny snake's,
That warms him in the noonday's fire.
She hath no thought, nor any hope,
Save of herself and her desire.

She is not life; she is not death;
She is not fear, or joy or grief.
Her soul is like a quiet sea
Beneath a ruin-haunted reef.

She is the shape the sailor sees,
That slips the rock without a sound.
She is the soul that comes and goes
And leaves no mark, yet makes a wound.

SOUL'S DESIRE

She is the soul that hunts and flies;
She is a world-wide mist of care.
She is the restlessness of life,
Its rapture and despair.

BALLAD OF LAUNCELOT AND ELAINE

It was a hermit on Whitsunday
That came to the Table Round.
"King Arthur, wit ye by what Knight
May the Holy Grail be found?"

"By never a Knight that liveth now;
By none that feasteth here."
King Arthur marvelled when he said,
"He shall be got this year."

Then uprose brave Sir Launcelot
And there did mount his steed,
And hastened to a pleasant town
That stood in knightly need.

Where many people him acclaimed,
He passed the Corbin pounte,
And there he saw a fairer tower
Than ever was his wont.

And in that tower for many years
A dolorous lady lay,
Whom Queen Northgalis had bewitched,
And also Queen le Fay.

And Launcelot loosed her from those pains,
And there a dragon slew.
Then came King Pelles out and said,
"Your name, brave Knight and true?"

"My name is Pelles, wit ye well,
And King of the far country;
And I, Sir Knight, am cousin nigh
To Joseph of Armathie."

"I am Sir Launcelot du Lake."
And then they clung them fast;
And yede into the castle hall
To take the king's repast.

Anon there cometh in a dove
By the window's open fold,
And in her mouth was a rich censer,
That shone like Ophir gold.

And therewithal was such savor
As bloweth over sea
From a land of many colored flowers
And trees of spicery.

And therewithal was meat and drink,
And a damsel passing fair,
Betwixt her hands of tulip-white,
A golden cup did bear.

"O, Jesu," said Sir Launcelot,
"What may this marvel mean?"
"That is," said Pelles, "richest thing
That any man hath seen."

"O, Jesu," said Sir Launcelot,
"What may this sight avail?"
"Now wit ye well," said King Pelles,
"That was the Holy Grail."

Then by this sign King Pelles knew
Elaine his fair daughter
Should lie with Launcelot that night,
And Launcelot with her.

And that this twain should get a child
Before the night should fail,
Who would be named Sir Galahad,
And find the Holy Grail.

Then cometh one hight Dame Brisen
With Pelles to confer,
"Now, wit ye well, Sir Launcelot
Loveth but Guinevere."

"But if ye keep him well in hand,
The while I work my charms,
The maid Elaine, ere spring of morn,
Shall lie within his arms."

Dame Brisen was the subtlest witch
That was that time in life;
She was as if Beelzebub
Had taken her to wife.

Then did she cause one known of face
To Launcelot to bring,
As if it came from Guinevere,
Her wonted signet ring.

"By Holy Rood, thou comest true,
For well I know thy face.
Where is my lady?" asked the Knight,
"There in the Castle Case?"

"'Tis five leagues scarcely from this hall,"
Up spoke that man of guile.
"I go this hour," said Launcelot,
"Though it were fifty mile."

Then sped Dame Brisen to the king
And whispered, "An we thrive,
Elaine must reach the Castle Case
Ere Launcelot arrive."

Elaine stole forth with twenty knights
And a goodly company.
Sir Launcelot rode fast behind,
Queen Guinevere to see.

Anon he reached the castle door.
Oh! fond and well deceived.
And there it seemed the queen's own train
Sir Launcelot received.

"Where is the queen?" quoth Launcelot,
For I am sore bestead,"
"Have not such haste," said Dame Brisen,
"The queen is now in bed."

"Then lead me thither," saith he,
"And cease this jape of thine."
"Now sit thee down," said Dame Brisen,
"And have a cup of wine."

"For wit ye not that many eyes
Upon you here have stared;
Now have a cup of wine until
All things may be prepared."

Elaine lay in a fair chamber,
'Twixt linen sweet and clene.
Dame Brisen all the windows stopped,
That no day might be seen.

Dame Brisen fetched a cup of wine
And Launcelot drank thereof.
"No more of flagons," saith he,
"For I am mad for love."

Dame Brisen took Sir Launcelot
Where lay the maid Elaine.
Sir Launcelot entered the bed chamber
The queen's love for to gain.

Sir Launcelot kissed the maid Elaine,
And her cheeks and brows did burn;
And then they lay in other's arms
Until the morn's underne.

Anon Sir Launcelot arose
And toward the window groped,
And then he saw the maid Elaine
When he the window oped.

"Ah, traitoress," saith Launcelot,
And then he gat his sword,
"That I should live so long and now
Become a knight abhorred."

"False traitoress," saith Launcelot,
And then he shook the steel.
Elaine skipped naked from the bed
And 'fore the knight did kneel.

"I am King Pelles own daughter
And thou art Launcelot,
The greatest knight of all the world.
This hour we have begot."

"Oh, traitoress Brisen," cried the knight,
"Oh, charmed cup of wine;
That I this treasonous thing should do
For treasures such as thine."

"Have mercy," saith maid Elaine,
"Thy child is in my womb."
Thereat the morning's silvern light
Flooded the bridal room.

That light it was a benison;
It seemed a holy boon,
As when behind a wrack of cloud
Shineth the summer moon.

And in the eyes of maid Elaine
Looked forth so sweet a faith,
Sir Launcelot took his glittering sword,
And thrust it in the sheath.

"So God me help, I spare thy life,
But I am wretch and thrall,
If any let my sword to make
Dame Brisen's head to fall."

"So have thy will of her," she said,
"But do to me but good;
For thou hast had my fairest flower,
Which is my maidenhood."

"And we have done the will of God,
And the will of God is best."
Sir Launcelot lifted the maid Elaine
And hid her on his breast.

Anon there cometh in a dove,
By the window's open fold,
And in her mouth was a rich censer
That shone like beaten gold.

And therewithal was such savor,
As bloweth over sea,
From a land of many colored flowers,
And trees of spicery.

And therewithal was meat and drink,
And a damsel passing fair,
Betwixt her hands of silver white
A golden cup did bear.

"O Jesu," said Sir Launcelot,
"What may this marvel mean?"
"That is," she said, "the richest thing
That any man hath seen."

"O Jesu," said Sir Launcelot,
"What may this sight avail?"
"Now wit ye well," said maid Elaine,
"This is the Holy Grail."

And then a nimbus light hung o'er
Her brow so fair and meek;
And turned to orient pearls the tears
That glistered down her cheek.

And a sound of music passing sweet
Went in and out again.
Sir Launcelot made the sign of the cross,
And knelt to maid Elaine.

"Name him whatever name thou wilt,
But be his sword and mail
Thrice tempered 'gainst a wayward world,
That lost the Holy Grail."

Sir Launcelot sadly took his leave
And rode against the morn.
And when the time was fully come
Sir Galahad was born.

Also he was from Jesu Christ,
Our Lord, the eighth degree;
Likewise the greatest knight this world
May ever hope to see.

THE DEATH OF SIR LAUNCELOT

Sir Launcelot had fled to France
For the peace of Guinevere,
And many a noble knight was slain,
And Arthur lay on his bier.

Sir Launcelot took ship from France
And sailed across the sea.
He rode seven days through fair England
Till he came to Almesbury.

Then spake Sir Bors to Launcelot:
The old time is at end;
You have no more in England's realm
In east nor west a friend.

You have no friend in all England
Sith Mordred's war hath been,
And Queen Guinevere became a nun
To heal her soul of sin.

Sir Launcelot answered never a word
But rode to the west countree
Until through the forest he saw a light
That shone from a nunnery.

Sir Launcelot entered the cloister,
And the queen fell down in a swoon.
Oh blessed Jesu, saith the queen,
For thy mother's love, a boon.

Go hence, Sir Launcelot, saith the queen,
And let me win God's grace.
My heavy heart serves me no more
To look upon thy face.

Through you was wrought King Arthur's death,
Through you great war and wrake.
Leave me alone, let me bleed,
Pass by for Jesu's sake.

Then fare you well, saith Launcelot,
Sweet Madam, fare you well.
And sythen you have left the world
No more in the world I dwell.

Then up rose sad Sir Launcelot
And rode by wold and mere
Until he came to a hermitage
Where bode Sir Bedivere.

And there he put a habit on
And there did pray and fast.
And when Sir Bedivere told him all
His heart for sorrow brast.

THE DEATH OF SIR LAUNCELOT

How that Sir Mordred, traitorous knight
Betrayed his King and sire;
And how King Arthur wounded, died
Broken in heart's desire.

And so Sir Launcelot penance made,
And worked at servile toil;
And prayed the Bishop of Canterbury
His sins for to assoil.

His shield went clattering on the wall
To a dolorous wail of wind;
His casque was rust, his mantle dust
With spider webs entwined.

His listless horses left alone
Went cropping where they would,
To see the noblest knight of the world
Upon his sorrow brood.

Anon a Vision came in his sleep,
And thrice the Vision saith:
Go thou to Almesbury for thy sin,
Where lieth the queen in death.

Sir Launcelot cometh to Almesbury
And knelt by the dead queen's bier;
Oh none may know, moaned Launcelot,
What sorrow lieth here.

What love, what honor, what defeat
What hope of the Holy Grail.
The moon looked through the latticed glass
On the queen's face cold and pale.

Sir Launcelot kissed the ceréd cloth,
And none could stay his woe,
Her hair lay back from the oval brow,
And her nose was clear as snow.

They wrapped her body in cloth of Raines,
They put her in webs of lead.
They coffined her in white marble,
And sang a mass for the dead.

Sir Launcelot and seven knights
Bore torches around the bier.
They scattered myrrh and frankincense
On the corpse of Guinevere.

They put her in earth by King Arthur
To the chant of a doleful tune.
They heaped the earth on Guinevere
And Launcelot fell in a swoon.

Sir Launcelot went to the hermitage
Some Grace of God to find;
But never he ate, and never he drank
And there he sickened and dwined.

Sir Launcelot lay in a painful bed,
And spake with a dreary steven;
Sir Bishop, I pray you shrive my soul
And make it clean for heaven.

The Bishop houseled Sir Launcelot,
The Bishop kept watch and ward.
Bury me, saith Sir Launcelot,
In the earth of Joyous Guard.

Three candles burned the whole night through
Till the red dawn looked in the room.
And the white, white soul of Launcelot
Strove with a black, black doom.

I see the old witch Dame Brisen,
And Elaine so straight and tall —
Nay, saith the Bishop of Canterbury,
The shadows dance on the wall.

I see long hands of dead women,
They clutch for my soul eftsoon;
Nay, saith the Bishop of Canterbury,
'Tis the drifting light of the moon.

I see three angels, saith he,
Before a silver urn.
Nay, saith the Bishop of Canterbury,
The candles do but burn.

I see a cloth of red samite
O'er the holy vessels spread.
Nay, saith the Bishop of Canterbury,
The great dawn groweth red.

I see all the torches of the world
Shine in the room so clear.
Nay, saith the Bishop of Canterbury,
The white dawn draweth near.

Sweet lady, I behold the face
Of thy dear son, our Lord,
Nay, saith the Bishop of Canterbury,
The sun shines on your sword.

Sir Galahad outstretcheth hands
And taketh me ere I fail —
Sir Launcelot's body lay in death
As his soul found the Holy Grail.

They laid his body in the quire
Upon a purple pall.
He was the meekest, gentlest knight
That ever ate in hall.

He was the kingliest, goodliest knight
That ever England roved,
The truest lover of sinful man
That ever woman loved.

I pray you all, fair gentlemen,
Pray for his soul and mine.
He lived to lose the heart he loved
And drink but bitter wine.

He wrought a woe he knew not of,
He failed his fondest quest,
Now sing a psalter, read a prayer
May all souls find their rest.

Amen.

IN MICHIGAN

You wrote:
"Come over to Saugatuck
And be with me on the warm sand,
And under cool beeches and aromatic cedars."
And just then no one could do a thing in the city
For the lure of far places, and something that tugged
At one's heart because of a June sky,
And stretches of blue water,
And a warm wind blowing from the south.
What could I do but take a boat
And go to meet you?

And when to-day is not enough,
But you must live to-morrow also;
And when the present stands in the way
Of something to come,
And there is but one you would see,
All the interval of waiting is a wall.
And so it was I walked the landward deck
With flapping coat and hat pulled down;
And I sat on the leeward deck and looked
At the streaming smoke of the funnels,
And the far waste of rhythmical water,
And at the gulls flying by our side.

There was music on board and dancing,
But I could not take part.
For above all there was the bluest sky,
And around us the urge of magical distances.
And just because you were in the violins,
And in everything, and were wholly the world
Of sense and sight,
It was too much. One could not live it
And make it all his own —
It was too much.
And I wondered where the rest could be going,
Or what they thought of water and sky
Without knowing you.

But at four o'clock there was a rim,
A circled edge of rainbow color
Which suspired, widened and narrowed under your gaze:
It was the phantasy of straining eyes,
Or land — and it was land.
It was distant trees.
And then it was dunes, bluffs of yellow sand.
We began to wonder how far it was —
Five miles, or ten miles —
Surely only five miles! —
But at last whatever it was we swung to the end.
We rounded the lighthouse pier,
Almost before we knew.

We slowed our speed in a dizzy river of black,
We drifted softly to dock.

I took the ferry,
I crossed the river,
I ran almost through the little batch
Of fishermen's shacks.
I climbed the winding road of the hill,
And dove in a shadowy quiet
Of paths of moss and dancing leaves,
And straight stretched limbs of giant pines
On patches of sky.
I ran to the top of the bluff
Where the lodge-house stood.
And there the sunlit lake burst on me
And wine-like air.
And below me was the beach
Where the serried lines of hurrying water
Came up like rank on rank of men
And fell with a shout on the rocks!
I plunged, I stumbled, I ran
Down the hill,
For I thought I saw you,
And it was you, you were there!
And I shall never forget your cry,
Nor how you raised your arms and cried,
And laughed when you saw me.
And there we were with the lake

And the sun with his ruddy search-light blaze
Stretching back to lost Chicago.
The sun, the lake, the beach, and ourselves
Were all that was left of Time,
All else was lost.

You were making a camp.
You had bent from the bank a cedar bough
And tied it down.
And over it flung a quilt of many colors,
And under it spread on the voluptuous silt
Gray blankets and canvas pillows.
I saw it all in a glance.
And there in dread of eyes we stood
Scanning the bluff and the beach,
Lest in the briefest touch of lips
We might be seen.

For there were eyes, or we thought
There were eyes, on the porch of the lodge,
And eyes along the forest's rim on the hill,
And eyes on the shore.
But a minute past there was no sun,
Only a star that shone like a match which lights
To a blue intenseness amid the glow of a hearth.
And we sat on the sand as dusk came down
In a communion of silence and low words.
Till you said at last: "We'll sup at the lodge,

Then say good night to me and leave
As if to stay overnight in the village.
But instead make a long detour through the wood
And come to the shore through that ravine,
Be here at the tent at midnight."

And so I did.
I stole through echoless ways,
Where no twigs broke and where I heard
My heart beat like a watch under a pillow.
And the whippoorwills were singing.
And the sound of the surf below me
Was the sound of silver-poplar leaves
In a wind that makes no pause. . . .
I hurried down the steep ravine,
And a bat flew up at my feet from the brush
And crossed the moon.
To my left was the lighthouse,
And black and deep purples far away,
And all was still.
Till I stood breathless by the tent
And heard your whispered welcome,
And felt your kiss.

Lovers lay at mid-night
On roofs of Memphis and Athens
And looked at tropical stars
As large as golden beetles.
Nothing is new, save this,

And this is always new.
And there in your tent
With the balm of the mid-night breeze
Sweeping over us,
We looked at one great star
Through a flap of your many-colored tent,
And the eternal quality of rapture
And mystery and vision flowed through us.

Next day we went to Grand Haven,
For my desire was your desire,
Whatever wish one had the other had.
And up the Grand River we rowed,
With rushes and lily pads about us,
And the sand hills back of us,
Till we came to a quiet land,
A lotus place of farms and meadows.
And we tied our boat to Schmitty's dock,
Where we had a dinner of fish.
And where, after resting, to follow your will
We drifted back to Spring Lake —
And under a larger moon,
Now almost full,
Walked three miles to The Beeches,
By a winding country road,
Where we had supper.
And afterwards a long sleep,
Waking to the song of robins.

And that day I said:
There are wild places, blue water, pine forests,
There are apple orchards, and wonderful roads
Around Elk Lake — shall we go?
And we went, for your desire was mine.
And there we climbed hills,
And ate apples along the shaded ways,
And rolled great boulders down the steeps
To watch them splash in the water.
And we stood and wondered what was beyond
The farther shore two miles away.
And we came to a place on the shore
Where four great pine trees stood,
And underneath them wild flowers to the edge
Of sand so soft for naked feet.
And here, for not a soul was near,
We stripped and swam far out, laughing, rejoicing,
Rolling and diving in those great depths
Of bracing water under a glittering sun.

There were farm houses enough
For food and shelter.
But something urged us on.
One knows the end and dreads the end
Yet seeks the end.
And you asked, "Is there a town near?
Let's see a town."
So we walked to Traverse City

Through cut-over land and blasted
Trunks and stumps of pine,
And by the side of desolate hills.
But when we got to Traverse City
You were not content, nor was I.
Something urged us on.
Then you thought of Northport
And of its Norse and German fishermen,
And its quaint piers where they smoke fish.
So we drove for thirty miles
In a speeding automobile
Over hills, around sudden curves, into warm coverts,
Or hollows, sometimes at the edge of the Bay,
Again on the hill,
From where we could see Old Mission
Amid blues and blacks, across a score of miles of the
Bay,
Waving like watered silk under the moon!
And by meadows of clover newly cut,
And by peach orchards and vineyards.
But when we came to the little town
Already asleep, though it was but eight o'clock,
And only a few drowsy lamps
With misty eyelids shone from a store or two,
I said, "Do you see those twinkling lights?
That's Northport Point, that's the Cedar Cabin —
Let's go to the Cedar Cabin."

And so we crossed the Bay
Amid great waves in a plunging launch,
And a roaring breeze and a great moon,
For now the moon was full.

So here was the Cedar Cabin
On a strip of land as wide as a house and lawn,
And on one side Lake Michigan,
And on one side the Bay.
There were distances of color all around,
And stars and darknesses of land and trees,
And at the point the lighthouse.
And over us the moon,
And over the balcony of our room
All of these, where we lay till I slept,
Listening to the water of the lake,
And the water of the Bay.
And we saw the moon sink like a red bomb,
And we saw the stars change
As the sky wheeled. . . . . .
Now this was the end of the earth,
For this strip of land
Ran out to a point no larger than one of the stumps
We saw on the desolate hills.
And moreover it seemed to dive under,
Or waste away in a sudden depth of water.
And around it was a swirl,
To the north the bounding waves of the Lake,

And to the south the Bay which seemed the Lake.
But could we speak of it, even though
I saw your eyes when you thought of it?
A sigh of wind blew through the rustic temple
When we saw this symbol together,
And neither spoke.
But that night, somewhere in the beginning of drowsiness,
You said: "There is no further place to go,
We must retrace."
And I awoke in a torrent of light in the room,
Hearing voices and steps on the walk:
I looked for you,
But you had arisen.
Then I dressed and searched for you,
But you were gone.
Then I stood for long minutes
Looking at a sail far out at sea
And departed too.

THE STAR

I am a certain god
Who slipped down from a remote height
To a place of pools and stars.
And I sat invisible
Amid a clump of trees
To watch the madmen.

There were cries and groans about me,
And shouts of laughter and curses.
Figures passed by with self-absorbed contempt,
Wrinkling in bitter smiles about their lips.
Others hurried on with set eyes
Pursuing something.
Then I said this is the place for mad Frederick —
Mad Frederick will be here.

But everywhere I could see
Figures sitting or standing
By little pools.
Some seemed grown into the soil
And were helpless.
And of these some were asleep.
Others laughed the laughter
That comes from dying men

Trying to face Death.
And others said "I should be content,"
And others said "I will fly."
Whereupon sepulchral voices muttered,
As of creatures sitting or hanging head down
From limbs of the trees,
"We will not let you."
And others looked in their pools
And clasped hands and said "Gone, all gone."
By other pools there were dead bodies:
Some of youth, some of age.
They had given up the fight,
They had drunk poisoned water,
They had searched
Until they fell —
All had gone mad!

Then I, a certain god,
Curious to know
What it is in pools and stars
That drives men and women
Over the earth in this quest
Waited for mad Frederick.
And then I heard his step.

I knew that long ago
He sat by one of these pools
Enraptured of a star's image.
And that hands, for his own good,

As they said,
Dumped clay into the pool
And blotted his star.
And I knew that after that
He had said, "They will never spy again
Upon my ecstasy.
They will never see me watching one star.
I will fly by rivers,
And by little brooks,
And by the edge of lakes,
And by little bends of water,
Where no wind blows,
And glance at stars as I pass.
They will never spy again
Upon my ecstasy."

And I knew that mad Frederick
In this flight
Through years of restless and madness
Was caught by the image of a star
In a mere beyond a meadow
Down from a hill, under a forest,
And had said,
"No one sees;
Here I can find life,
Through vision of eternal things."
But they had followed him.
They stood on the brow of the hill,

And when they saw him gazing in the water
They rolled a great stone down the hill,
And shattered the star's image.
Then mad Frederick fled with laughter.
It echoed through the wood.
And he said, "I will look for moons,
I will punish them who disturb me,
By worshiping moons."
But when he sought moons
They left him alone,
And he did not want the moons.
And he was alone, and sick from the moons,
And covered as with a white blankness,
Which was the worst madness of all.

And I, a certain god,
Waiting for mad Frederick
To enter this place of pools and stars,
Saw him at last.
With a sigh he looked about upon his fellows
Sitting or standing by their pools.
And some of the pools were covered with scum,
And some were glazed as of filth,
And some were grown with weeds,
And some were congealed as of the north wind,
And a few were yet pure,
And held the star's image.
And by these some sat and were glad,

Others had lost the vision.
The star was there, but its meaning vanished.
And mad Frederick, going here and there,
With no purpose,
Only curious and interested
As I was, a certain god,
Came by a certain pool
And saw a star.

He shivered,
He clasped his hands,
He sank to his knees,
He touched his lips to the water.

Then voices from the limbs of the trees muttered:
"There he is again."
"He must be driven away."
"The pool is not his."
"He does not belong here."
So as when bats fly in a cave
They swooped from their hidings in the trees
And dashed themselves in the pool.
Then I saw what these flying things were —
But no matter.
They were illusions, evil and envious
And dull,
But with power to destroy.
And mad Frederick turned away from the pool
And covered his eyes with his arms.

Then a certain god,
Of less power than mine,
Came and sat beside me and said:
"Why do you allow this to be?
They are all seeking,
Why do you not let them find their heart's delight?
Why do you allow this to be?"
But I did not answer.
The lesser god did not know
That I have no power,
That only the God has the power.
And that this must be
In spite of all lesser gods.

And I saw mad Frederick
Arise and ascend to the top of a high hill,
And I saw him find the star
Whose image he had seen in the pool.
Then he knelt and prayed:
"Give me to understand, O Star,
Your inner self, your eternal spirit,
That I may have you and not images of you,
So that I may know what has driven me through the world,
And may cure my soul.
For I know you are Eternal Love,
And I can never escape you.
And if I cannot escape you,

Then I must serve you.
And if I must serve you,
It must be to good and not ill —
You have brought me from the forest of pools
And the images of stars,
Here to the hill's top.
Where now do I go?
And what shall I do?"

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